

CICERO'S ROMULUS AND THE CRAFTING OF HISTORICAL *EXEMPLA*

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Abstract: I examine Cicero's use of Romulus as a historical *exemplum* in support of his theory of the ideal statesman. I compare Cicero's characterization of Romulus in *De Republica* to the Romulus accounts advanced in Livy's *History of Rome* and Dionysius' *Roman Antiquities* to better understand the character and composition of this historical *exemplum*. An examination of Livy's and Dionysius' more comprehensive Romulus accounts reveals Cicero's omission of character traits and actions that contradict his statesman ideal. By crafting an image of Romulus that largely conflicts with his portrayal in the collective cultural memory, Cicero attempts to re-shape the 'traditional' archetype of Roman statesmanship.

Keywords: Cicero, Romulus, *exempla*, *rector* ideal, cultural memory, Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

Introduction

Foundation narratives serve to promote civic education, instill individual and communal virtue, and facilitate social unity through the creation of what Jan Assmann terms *cultural memory*: 'a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behavior and experience in the interactive framework of a society'.² The individual characters that populate foundation narratives occupy a permanent position in a society's cultural memory and serve as universal reference points for the attributes, virtues and beliefs that make a people 'unique'. In the ancient Roman context, Romulus — Rome's founder and first king — was viewed as the historical embodiment of 'Romanness' and, as such, was routinely invoked as an *exemplum* in support of specific intellectual, artistic and political ends.³ Cicero himself advanced a version of the Romulus narrative, but it departs from other accounts in important ways. What are we to make of these departures?

I seek to examine Cicero's use of Romulus as a historical *exemplum* in support of his theory of the 'ideal statesman' or *rector* ideal. More specifically, I will compare Cicero's characterization of Romulus in Book II of *De Republica* to the accounts of Romulus advanced in Livy's *History of Rome* and Dionysius of Halicarnassus's *Roman Antiquities* with the goal of better understanding

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² J. Assmann, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique*, 65 (1995), p. 125. See also W. Isaacs and J. Kolodny, 'The Role of Myths in Critical Education', *The Journal of Educational Sociology*, 21 (1948), pp. 472–81.

³ Jaclyn Neel, *Legendary Rivals: Collegiality and Ambition in the Tales of Early Rome* (Boston, 2015), p. 2.

the specific character and composition of this historical *exemplum*. A close examination of Livy's and Dionysius' more comprehensive Romulus accounts reveals that Cicero omits character traits and actions that contradict his statesman ideal. Ultimately, I argue that by crafting an image of Romulus that largely conflicts with his portrayal in the collective cultural memory, Cicero attempts to re-write Roman history and, in doing so, re-shape the 'traditional' archetype of Roman statesmanship. More expressly, he endeavours to show that his *rector* ideal is more consistent with traditional Roman statesmanship than the actions of political opportunists like Sulla, Verres and Caesar — all of whom show similarities to the conventional image of Romulus. In doing so, Cicero seeks to legitimize his prescriptive model for current and future statesmen by establishing its essential 'Roman' character, while simultaneously portraying men of Caesar's ilk as traitorous or un-Roman.

I will first discuss the fundamental role of *exempla* in ancient sources and situate Cicero's use of historical *exempla* within this tradition. I will then analyse Cicero's understanding of *prudentia* as an essential virtue of the ideal statesman and discuss his overall goal of shaping Romulus into an *exemplum* of *prudentia*. I will also examine Scipio's narrative account of *Romulus* in Book II of *De Republica* with the purpose of demonstrating Cicero's manipulation and omission of facts in service of his *exemplum*. Next, I will use Livy and Dionysius' Romulus narratives to highlight specific character traits and actions omitted from Cicero's account that contradict his conception of the ideal statesman and *prudentia* in particular. Finally, I will show that the similarities between Cicero's criticisms of Caesar in his *Letters to Atticus* and the traits omitted from his Romulus account can inform our understanding of the concerns that motivated his portrayal of Romulus as an *exemplum* of *prudentia*.

I

Cicero's Use of Historical *Exempla*

The use of *exempla* is a distinguishing feature of ancient history, philosophy and rhetoric. Historical *exempla*, in particular, are strategically employed to grant legitimacy to moral, political, religious and legal arguments by drawing on a society's collective cultural memory. The historical figures employed as *exempla* are rarely fixed or unambiguous. Rather, these individuals or groups serve as malleable stock characters, imbued with virtues and vices that advance the author's agenda.⁴ While this implies significant flexibility in employing such devices, specific criteria must be satisfied in the shaping of effective *exempla*. First, the individual or group must occupy a recognizable position in the cultural memory. Typical *exempla* employed in the Roman

⁴ H. Van der Blom, *Cicero's Role Models: The Political Strategy of a Newcomer* (Oxford, 2010), p. 77; M. Fox, *Cicero's Philosophy of History* (New York, 2007).

context consist of pre-eminent or infamous historical figures that draw parallels to the character and behaviour of contemporary statesmen or military men.⁵ If the individual does not occupy a position in the collective consciousness, the *exemplum* cannot serve as an identifiable rhetorical or didactic model. Second, the author or speaker is at liberty to manipulate known 'facts' to suit their argument, but these 'facts' must remain within the bounds of the cultural memory. While *exempla* are malleable, they cannot *fundamentally* contradict the public's shared image of a historical individual or group. Identifiable historical figures and events possess fixed elements that cannot be manipulated.⁶

Modern scholarship on Cicero's use of historical *exempla* attempts to explain both how and why he employs this strategy across various genres. Dan Hanchev and Elizabeth Rawson each show that Cicero's historiographical approach is quintessentially 'ancient' in the sense that he does not privilege accuracy or verifiability above the utility of the narrative.⁷ His historical events and actors are not intended to be examined objectively within a specific context. Rather, the audience is meant to actively pass judgment on historical figures and exalt those that meet contemporary social and moral standards. Van der Blom adds that Cicero's historical *exempla* are selected from the political and military elite of Roman antiquity. The lives of these individuals are both ambiguously defined and well-documented in the cultural memory, which renders them amenable to manipulation.⁸ Finally, Elisabeth Asmis demonstrates that Cicero typically distills his historical *exempla* into the embodiment of a single virtue or vice by 'pruning' unnecessary details and shaping facts into a unified portrait of the attribute in question.⁹ While most scholars agree on Cicero's historical methodology, there is far less consensus on the purpose of his historical *exempla*. Ultimately, attempts to identify a single 'purpose or end' are misleading given the fact that Cicero employs his historical *exempla* across a range of literary genres.¹⁰

Although Cicero's writings and speeches utilize historical *exempla* in several ways, the present study will focus on Cicero's use of historical *exempla* in *De Republica* as a strategy to advance his model of the ideal statesman. Contrary to scholars that view Cicero's use of historical *exempla* in philosophical

⁵ Van der Blom, *Cicero's Role Models*, p. 77.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁷ D. Hanchev, 'Days of Future Past: Fiction Forming Fact in Cicero's Dialogues', *The Classical Journal*, 110 (2014), p. 62; E. Rawson, 'Cicero the Historian and Cicero the Antiquarian', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 62 (1972), p. 33.

⁸ Van der Blom, *Cicero's Role Models*, pp. 3–4.

⁹ E. Asmis, 'Cicero Mythologus: The Myth of the Founders in *De Republica*', *The Classical Journal*, 110 (2014), p. 36.

¹⁰ Van der Blom, *Cicero's Role Models*, p. 4.

dialogues as a means of justifying his place in Roman politics,¹¹ I argue that Cicero's historical *exempla* serve as rhetorical devices designed to legitimize his theory of the ideal statesman by attaching essential political virtues to pre-eminent figures from Roman antiquity.¹² Thus, my view is in keeping with Jonathan Zarecki's characterization of the *rector* ideal as 'a practical template for public life in an increasingly violent and fractured political community'.¹³

To better conceptualize Cicero's approach to crafting historical *exempla*, I will offer a case study of Cicero's portrayal of Romulus in Book II of *De Republica*. This text, written between 54 and 51 BC, is ideal for examining Cicero's approach to historical *exempla* for two reasons. First, many scholars view *De Republica* — along with *De Legibus* — as Cicero's most comprehensive treatment of his political philosophy and his theory of the ideal statesman.¹⁴ Secondly, *De Republica* can be viewed, in part, as Cicero's most nuanced attempt to reckon with the current course of Roman politics and the future of the Republic. Thus, parallels can be drawn between Cicero's observation of political events from 70 to 43 BC — as documented in his speeches and personal correspondence — and his presentation of the ideal statesman in *De Republica*.¹⁵

As the acknowledged 'founder of Rome' and the historical embodiment of 'Romanness', Romulus undoubtedly occupied a prominent position in the Roman cultural memory.¹⁶ As such, the popular portrait of Romulus was factually complex and morally ambiguous. Interpretations of his character varied across time and context and were often influenced by contemporary concerns and polemical motives.¹⁷ Thus, Romulus serves as an ideal *exemplum* due to the flexibility of his character and his authoritative presence in the cultural memory. Cicero capitalizes on Romulus' status as a stock-*exemplum* and shapes his character and actions to embody his ideal statesman. More

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

¹² W. Nicgorski, *Cicero's Practical Philosophy* (Notre Dame, 2012); J. Jackson Barlow, 'The Education of Statesmen in Cicero's *De Republica*', *Polity*, 19 (1987), pp. 353–74.

¹³ J. Zarecki, *Cicero's Ideal Statesman in Theory and Practice* (London, 2014).

¹⁴ Nicgorski, *Cicero's Practical Philosophy*; Zarecki, *Cicero's Ideal Statesman*; J. Zetzel, 'Introduction', in Cicero, *On the Commonwealth and On the Laws*, trans. J. Zetzel (Cambridge, 2017) (henceforth = *DR*).

¹⁵ See Barlow, 'The Education of Statesmen'; Zarecki, *Cicero's Ideal Statesman*; Zetzel, 'Introduction'.

¹⁶ Asmis, 'Cicero Mythologus', pp. 29–30.

¹⁷ J. Neel, *Legendary Rivals: Collegiality and Ambition in the Tales of Early Rome* (Boston, 2015); R. Stem, 'The Exemplary Lessons of Livy's Romulus', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 137 (2007), pp. 435–71; M. Fox, *Roman Historical Myths: The Regal Period in Augustan Literature* (Oxford and New York, 1996), p. 234.

specifically, I argue that Cicero distills Romulus into an *exemplum* of *prudentia* — the fundamental virtue of the ideal statesman. By demonstrating the connection between Romulus' *prudentia* and the rapid growth of early Rome, Cicero crafts an *exemplum* of 'traditional' Roman leadership that grants historical legitimacy to his *rector* ideal.

II

Prudentia and Cicero's Romulus Narrative in *De Republica*

Before we can assess how Cicero shapes Romulus into the embodiment of *prudentia*, we must first define *prudentia* as presented in *De Republica*. In doing so, it becomes apparent that this virtue encompasses a number of attributes that are vital to Cicero's ideal statesman. Throughout Book II, Scipio develops a coherent image of *prudentia* in the following passages:

This is the essential element of civic prudence: to see the paths and turns of commonwealths, so that when you know in what direction any action tends, you can hold it back or anticipate it.¹⁸

But in fact the man of foresight is one who, as we often saw in Africa [referring to Scipio Africanus] sits on a huge and destructive creature, keeps it in order and directs it, and by a gentle instruction or touch turns the animal in any direction it wants.¹⁹

But what's hidden in human spirits, the part of the spirit that's called the mind, has to rein in and control not just one creature or one easy to control, and it doesn't succeed in that very often.²⁰

He never ceases educating and observing himself . . . through the brilliance of his mind and life he offers himself as a mirror to his fellow citizens.²¹

Taken together, these statements elucidate the various attributes that contribute to *prudentia*. First, the metaphor of driving a 'huge and destructive' creature demonstrates that the statesman must not only maintain order, but must guide the state along its proper course. Thus, the man of *prudentia* must possess knowledge of where to direct the state and the practical skill required to move it accordingly. Nicgorski describes this combination of knowledge and skill as an intimate relationship between philosophical wisdom and political aptitude.²² Second, the prudent statesman must see far into the future and position the state to meet distant goals. This ability to 'see the paths and turns of the commonwealth' combines traits of wisdom and foresight in a continual process of ordering the present in anticipation of the future. Third, Scipio

¹⁸ DR II.45.

¹⁹ DR II.67.

²⁰ DR II.69a.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Nicgorski, *Cicero's Practical Philosophy*, pp. 222–3.

emphasizes the *manner* in which the state should be moved: ‘by a gentle instruction and touch’. Thus, the man of *prudentia* ‘reins in and directs’ the state via persuasive teaching rather than cruel punishment. In this sense, the prudent statesman does not operate on instinct or impulse. Rather, ‘he never ceases educating and observing himself’. He does not allow himself to be guided by the spirited part of the soul because his rational faculties — shaped by philosophical study and practical experience — assume control. Finally, the man of *prudentia* offers himself as a model to his subjects and, as such, there must be nothing in his behaviour that contradicts his exemplary public image. As a result, the prudent statesman must order his own soul in the same manner that he orders the state itself.

On the whole, *prudentia* encompasses practical experience in directing the affairs of the state, an ability to persuade by instruction, the possession of wisdom and foresight, and the maintenance of a well-ordered soul. In this light, Cicero’s portrayal of Romulus in Book II can be viewed as an effort to distill his character and behaviour into a coherent *exemplum* of *prudentia*. If Romulus is to serve as a legitimate model of Roman statesmanship, any details that contradict this idealized narrative must either be minimized or excised completely. As I will show, Cicero uses Scipio’s Romulus account to re-write Roman history and, in doing so, advance his ideal statesman as the ‘traditional’ archetype of Roman leadership.

Scipio begins his account of ‘our commonwealth as it’s born, grows up and comes of age’ by acknowledging Romulus’ perennial status in the Roman cultural memory.²³ He immediately distinguishes ‘fable and fact’ when describing Romulus’ descent from the god Mars. This biographical detail is ‘wisely passed down’ by tradition because ‘men who have deserved well of the community should be thought to be divine by birth as well as by talent’.²⁴ Although this statement appears trivial, it establishes Romulus as an individual worthy of imitation by linking his character and actions to the divine. In doing so, it legitimizes Cicero’s ideal statesman model by attaching the promise of deification to those who follow Romulus’ ‘traditional’ example. In this sense, divinity is not only contingent upon one’s birth, but it can also be earned through the ‘skilful’ exercise of *prudentia*.

Before entering into the ‘facts’, Scipio notes that Romulus and Remus were disowned by King Amulius, left to die on the banks of the Tiber, and subse-

²³ As noted, Scipio’s Romulus narrative unfolds within the context of a broader philosophical dialogue. Although it is widely accepted that Cicero uses Scipio as his mouthpiece, there is ongoing debate as to the role of the supporting characters. In keeping with J. Barlow’s assertion that ‘the structure and arrangement of the dialogue may reveal the questions that Cicero sought to address’, I will consider both Scipio’s account and Laelius’ immediate response as part of Cicero’s larger didactic project. See Barlow, ‘The Education of Statesmen’, p. 356.

²⁴ *DR* II.4.

quently saved by a 'woodland beast'.²⁵ Cicero downplays the mythical elements of Romulus' early life because they contradict his image of perfect *prudentia*.²⁶ If Romulus' wisdom and foresight are to be imitated, the events of his early life must be detached from notions of divine providence. By using the term 'woodland beast' in place of 'she-wolf', Cicero (via Scipio) signals to his audience that such 'mythological' details are unimportant to Romulus' overall character.

Moving into the 'factual' elements of the narrative, Scipio explains that Romulus' 'physical strength and fierce spirit' led everyone to 'readily and freely obey him'.²⁷ In this sense, Romulus' early introduction to leadership demonstrates the important role of practical experience in cultivating *prudentia*. The prudent statesman must learn, in part, by *doing*. It is not enough to possess wisdom and right-reason; rather, these mental faculties must be put into early practice and developed over time. Next, Romulus is said to lead 'forces' against Alba Longa and kill King Amulius. Although it is noted that this action earned him much 'glory', there is a surprising lack of detail accorded to this event. Scipio offers no motive for the attack or the murder of Amulius, which leaves the modern reader with a host of unanswered questions. However, we can make two assumptions based on our discussion of the Roman collective memory and Cicero's ultimate goal. First, Cicero's audience would have been aware of the details underlying this story and thus would not have been particularly moved by the lack of explication. Second, these omitted details either contradict or lend little support to the image of Romulus' *prudentia* and must therefore be 'pruned' from the narrative.²⁸

After his successful rout of Alba Longa, Romulus 'thinks of founding a city and of establishing a commonwealth'.²⁹ As evidence of his wisdom, Scipio notes how Romulus intuitively distinguishes between a city (a physical location) and a commonwealth ('an assemblage of some size associated with one another through agreement on law and community of interest'). In this sense, Romulus understands the importance of political legitimacy and a positive legal framework in the formation of any civil society. Additionally, he recognizes the proper limits of rule and the dangers of operating outside 'community interest'.

Romulus is also praised for his decision to construct the city of Rome at the mouth of the Tiber, an 'amazingly advantageous site'.³⁰ By cataloguing the benefits of avoiding a coastal location, Scipio demonstrates Romulus' intricate reasoning and deliberation. Rather than proving that Romulus had these

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Asmis, 'Cicero Mythologus', p. 36.

²⁷ *DR II.4.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *DR II.5.*

considerations in mind, Scipio tells his audience what Romulus must have been thinking. He eschews the possibility that the decision was a product of fate and he fails to acknowledge that Romulus builds his city in the exact location where he was abandoned and raised by local shepherds. Ultimately, this neglect reveals Cicero's efforts to craft a portrait of *prudentia* by manipulating facts to serve his own purpose. Next, Romulus builds great walls around the city, anticipating that Rome will 'one day be the home and center of the greatest empire'.³¹ Scipio attributes the initial plan for the 'Servian Wall' to Romulus despite the fact that the wall was not constructed until the fourth century BC.³² The image of long-term stability and protection conjured up by this mention of the great Servian Wall — linked to Romulus' general foresight — contributes to the overall impression of his *prudentia*.

Although the city is built with 'great speed', it is not yet self-sufficient. Thus, Romulus 'strengthen[ed] his new sate' by adopting, 'a new and somewhat crude plan, but one that, in terms of bolstering the resources of his kingdom and people, shows the mark of a great man who looked far into the future'.³³ By including this qualifying statement before his description of the infamous 'Rape of the Sabine Women', Scipio frames the event as essential to Rome's long-term survival and therefore a justifiable act of foresight. By fixating on the *necessity* of the act and minimizing moral concerns, he recasts the 'rape' as a 'somewhat crude' plan. This clinical tone is continued in Scipio's recounting of the event: the Sabines are invited to a festival, girls of 'good families' are kidnapped (not raped) and married, the Sabines attack the Romans, and a treaty is eventually reached.³⁴ Thus, the pragmatism of this decision overshadows concerns of virtue, justice and morality; Romulus is only to be judged by the long-term effects of his choices.³⁵ For the purposes of building a portrait of prudent leadership, future accomplishments are made to outweigh temporary moral qualms.

Finally, Romulus is credited with establishing 'two excellent foundations for the commonwealth, the auspices and the Senate'.³⁶ During the dual kingship of Romulus and Tatius, the leading citizens were formed into a 'royal council' that eventually became a quasi-senatorial body of 'conscript fathers'. Romulus' reliance on the royal council reflected Lycurgus' notion that 'states are guided and ruled better under the sole power of a king if the authority of

³¹ DR II.10–11.

³² Zetzel, 'Introduction', p. 36.

³³ DR II.12.

³⁴ DR II.12–13.

³⁵ Asmis, 'Cicero Mythologus', p. 31; See J. Zetzel, *De Republica: Selections* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 171. Zetzel characterizes this account as concerned with long-term foreign policy, rather than morality.

³⁶ DR II.17.

the most responsible citizens is added'.³⁷ When read carefully, we observe that Scipio does *not* claim that Romulus knew Lycurgus or that he merely copied his leadership style. Rather, each of these great intellects 'recognized and approved' this policy independent of one another. This passage lends significant weight to Romulus' wisdom and foresight by describing his decision-making as co-equal with Lycurgus, the legendary Spartan legislator. Again, Scipio does not prove that Romulus actually *understood* the long-term utility of this policy, but rather that he *must have understood* it because of its ultimate effectiveness. In this sense, any decision that works in Romulus' favour is framed as an act of *prudencia*.

Second, Romulus institutes the auspices, a practice which Rome 'still maintain[s] to the great advantage of public safety'.³⁸ By highlighting 'public safety' over religious devotion or genuine piety, Scipio frames Romulus' focus on the auspices as a method of directing the behaviour of the citizenry by utilizing their religious belief. In this way, Romulus orders and directs the commonwealth by controlling the 'decisions' of the gods. This display of wisdom and foresight allows Romulus to tame the 'huge and destructive creature' that is Rome at will. Finally, Scipio explains that Romulus corrected wrongdoings 'not by force or by physical punishments, but through the setting of fines'.³⁹ In the fashion of a prudent statesman, Romulus shows himself to be a persuasive teacher rather than a cruel disciplinarian. His use of fines is described as a judicious method of correcting dangerous behaviour.

Ultimately, Cicero's intent to advance a coherent *exemplum of prudencia*, rather than a nuanced or accurate historical narrative, becomes most transparent in Scipio's treatment of Romulus' 'mysterious disappearance'. According to Scipio, Romulus' achievements were so significant that when he failed to reappear after a solar eclipse, the people assumed that he 'became a god'.⁴⁰ Scipio's protracted defence of Romulus' deification is ironic given his initial emphasis on the separation of 'fable and fact'. First, he argues that Romulus lived in a time when 'literacy and learning were well-established' and 'primeval ignorance . . . had been eliminated'.⁴¹ Thus, if this story were mere legend, the 'highly cultivated' Romans of this age would have rejected it completely. Second, a respected citizen named Proculus Iulius attempted to 'dispel superstition' by testifying that he was visited by Romulus' spirit. Most Roman readers would have been unmoved by Scipio's defence of Romulus' deification, but such a defence is essential to Cicero's ultimate end. It diverts the readers' attention from the likely possibility of Romulus' murder and, simultaneously, legitimizes Cicero's *rector* ideal by framing Romulus' deification

³⁷ DR II.15.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ DR II.16.

⁴⁰ DR II.17.

⁴¹ DR II.18.

as a reward earned for conforming to *his* leadership model.⁴² In this sense, Cicero re-writes Roman history by portraying his ideal statesman as *the* traditional archetype of ‘Roman’ leadership.

Following Scipio’s account, Laelius raises a pointed objection: ‘From the outset, you’ve preferred to attribute your own discoveries to others rather than inventing it all yourself . . . and you ascribe to Romulus’s deliberate planning all the features of the site of the city which were actually the result of chance or necessity.’⁴³ With this critique, Laelius threatens the foundation upon which Scipio has constructed Romulus’ exemplary character. What exactly is Cicero’s motivation for undermining the historical validity of Scipio’s narrative? Matthew Fox interprets Laelius’ interjection as Cicero’s ironic critique of his own historical account.⁴⁴ More expressly, Fox views Cicero as ‘fracturing’ his own ideal and exposing Scipio as a creator rather than a conveyor of history. Thus, the reader is meant to view all forthcoming historical information with heightened scepticism. Closer to my view, Asmis and Michel contend that Cicero uses Laelius as a means of signalling to his audience the contemporary value of Scipio’s exemplary portrait.⁴⁵ By having Laelius highlight Scipio’s focus on Romulus’ ‘deliberate planning’, the reader is alerted to his attempt to distill the essence of Roman *prudentia* in a carefully constructed myth.⁴⁶ Regardless of its historical veracity, Cicero’s Romulus account legitimizes his *rector* ideal by framing *prudentia* as an essential trait of traditional Roman leadership.

While it is clear why Cicero chooses to manipulate and accentuate certain facts in support of his exemplary account, little work has been done to isolate and analyse the key traits and behaviours *omitted* from Cicero’s portrayal of Romulus that occupy a prominent place in the cultural memory. By turning to two key figures in the Roman historiographic tradition, Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, we can compare Cicero’s idealized account of Romulus to the more nuanced depictions advanced in Livy’s *The History of Rome* and Dionysius’ *Roman Antiquities*. In doing so, we can isolate the traits and behaviours that contradict Cicero’s conception of the ideal statesman and *prudentia* in particular. What emerges, I argue, is an alternative portrait of Romulus; a portrait reminiscent of the powerful contemporary political actors whom Cicero viewed as direct threats to the Roman Republic.

⁴² Ultimately, Romulus’ deification foreshadows Cicero’s presentation of Scipio’s Dream in Book VI.

⁴³ *DR* II.22.

⁴⁴ Fox, ‘Roman Historical Myths’.

⁴⁵ Asmis, ‘Cicero Mythologus’; A. Michel, ‘A propos de l’art du dialogue dans le De Republica: L’idé éalite chez Cicéron’, *REL*, 43 (1965), pp. 237–61.

⁴⁶ Asmis, ‘Cicero Mythologus’, p. 36.

III

The Romulus Account in Livy and Dionysius

Livy and Dionysius each offer an extended depiction of Romulus in their respective histories. By combining these accounts into one analysis, we can derive an image of Romulus that better approximates the multifaceted and morally ambiguous depiction of his character and behaviour in the Roman cultural memory. Before we proceed, two points of clarification must be addressed. First, I am not advancing an argument about the relative historical accuracy of Livy's *History of Rome* or Dionysius' *Roman Antiquities* in relation to Cicero's account. As previously stated, ancient historians valued history more for its practical application and less for its 'factual' portrayal of events. Thus, one can assume that both of these historians possess distinct motivations that shape their presentation of the 'facts'. However, the narratives advanced by these authors are notable for their descriptive detail and nuanced analysis. They frequently present differing, contradictory conclusions and challenge the reader to assess the evidence for themselves.⁴⁷ Thus, I argue that the heightened detail and presentation of divergent conclusions offered in these accounts constitute a credible approximation of Romulus' ambiguous image in the collective memory. Although one might question the use of Dionysius (a Greek historian) as a representative of the Roman cultural memory, Dionysius is distinct among Greek historians for his reliance on Roman sources and his desire to offer a more nuanced account than his Greek predecessors. According to Garry Miles, Dionysius' narrative is consistent 'in its main lines' with that of Livy.⁴⁸ In what follows, I will note any significant deviations between the two accounts.

Second, we must consider the context in which these works were produced. Livy wrote the first five books of his history between 35 BC and 25 BC, placing him somewhat contemporaneous with Cicero.⁴⁹ Similarly, Dionysius (of Greek origin) began to write *Roman Antiquities* in 30 BC and finally published the work around 7 BC. Although this temporal proximity invites comparison, it should be noted that Livy and Dionysius composed their works after the fall of the Republic and during the reign of Caesar Augustus (the first Roman Emperor). Cicero, on the other hand, composed *De Republica* in the atmosphere of an impending Civil War between Caesar and Pompey. While these unique contexts certainly affected the objectives of their respective works, these authors wrote within a similar cultural paradigm and collective memory. Thus, a close comparison of these sources will allow us to observe how Cicero's characterization of Romulus comports with his more detailed

⁴⁷ V. Warrior, 'Introduction', in T. Livy, *The History of Rome: Books 1–5*, trans. V. Warrior (Indianapolis, 2006) (henceforth = *HR*), pp. vi–xxvii; G.B. Miles, *Livy: Reconstructing Early Rome* (Ithaca, 1995), p. 179.

⁴⁸ Miles, *Reconstructing Rome*, p. 179.

⁴⁹ Warrior, 'Introduction', pp. ix–x.

portrayal in Livy and Dionysius. The following analysis will centre on three events: (1) Romulus' early life and the death of Remus; (2) Romulus' initial rule and the rape of the Sabine women; and (3) Romulus' later rule and 'mysterious' disappearance.

3.1. *Romulus' Early Life and the Death of Remus*

In both accounts, Romulus and Remus are born of a Vestal virgin. Although the woman claims that she was raped by the god Mars (so as to salvage her purity), it is implied that King Amulius perpetrated the deed himself.⁵⁰ In a fit of rage, the king imprisons the woman and orders the two boys to be drowned in the Tiber River. Immediately, the reader is presented with two contradictory interpretations of Romulus' conception that are absent from Cicero's narrative. The fact that Romulus is created by an act of sexual violence (whether divinely or humanly perpetrated) foreshadows the moral ambiguity of his character and actions and detracts from his status as an *exemplum* of *prudentia*. In this sense, it is clear why Cicero avoids drawing attention to the uncertainties surrounding Romulus' birth.

As Romulus and Remus are set to be drowned in the Tiber, the banks of the river overflow 'by some heaven-sent chance' and the boys are abandoned.⁵¹ Eventually, they are saved by a benevolent she-wolf. Both historians doubt the plausibility of this story and thus relegate it to mythic status.⁵² While Livy and Dionysius emphasize the mythological character of the she-wolf account, Cicero attempts to strip the story of its divine character by invoking the term 'woodland creature'. Although myths can serve as powerful *exempla* in their own right, mythology is intertwined with ideas of fate and divine providence, two principles that detract from Romulus' supposed wisdom and foresight. The notion that Romulus was spared 'by some heaven-sent chance' implies the presence of divine favour over his affairs and actions, which presents obvious challenges to his image as a model of *prudentia*.

Subsequently, the boys are adopted by the shepherd Faustulus and his wife (a known prostitute). They grow up to be very strong 'both in body and mind',⁵³ but their actions are described as violent and impetuous. Both authors portray Romulus and Remus attacking groups of travelling thieves on the roadside, taking their plunder, and distributing it among their men.⁵⁴ Although the act of stealing from thieves is morally ambiguous, the boys

⁵⁰ HR I.4; Dionysius of Hallicarnassus, *The Roman Antiquities: Volumes I and II*, trans. Earnest Cary (Cambridge, 1937) (henceforth RA), I.79.

⁵¹ HR I.4; RA I.79.

⁵² HR I.4; RA I.79. Both historians highlight the fact that the word 'she-wolf' is the same as 'prostitute' in Latin. Later in the account, the farmer Faustulus tasks his wife (a known prostitute) with raising the infants.

⁵³ HR I.4.

⁵⁴ HR I.5; RA I.79–80.

appear to act with little foresight as to the potential consequences of their exploits. This is the first intimation of a character trait that looms large in Livy's and Dionysius' accounts: Romulus' violent and war-like nature. Clearly, this attribute conflicts with the sober reason and foresight that define Cicero's prudent statesman.

During the feast of the Lupercalia, Romulus and Remus are attacked by the same thieves that they robbed on the roadside.⁵⁵ Although Romulus defends himself on the basis of his physical prowess, Remus is taken captive and sold to King Amulius. As Romulus prepares to mount a reckless attack on the king, his guardian (Faustulus) informs him of his royal birth and abandonment at the hands of Amulius. In this moment, Romulus' 'frenzied haste'⁵⁶ is quelled and he is saved from making an impetuous advance on the king.⁵⁷ At this point in the narrative, there is slight variation between Livy's and Dionysius' accounts. Dionysius takes greater liberties in describing Romulus' plot, going so far as to include his grandfather Numitor in the scheme. As it is told, Numitor lures King Amulius into a public gathering place and signals Romulus and his herdsmen-army to assassinate the king.⁵⁸ Conversely, Livy simply states that Romulus 'wove a net of guile' against King Amulius and enlisted the herdsmen because 'he was not yet strong enough to use open violence'.⁵⁹ Also, Livy describes the murder with peculiar ambiguity: 'And so he killed the king'.⁶⁰ While some scholars argue that the identity of the murderer cannot be determined with certainty,⁶¹ other translators attribute the killing to Romulus because his actions dominate the narrative.⁶²

Both Livy's and Dionysius' accounts portray Romulus as impetuous, fond of violence, and capable of deceit and brutality. Cicero, on the other hand, devotes only one line to these events: '[He] killed king Amulius'.⁶³ Romulus' use of deceit and his willingness to commit regicide accentuates the moral ambiguity of his actions. Even if the murder can be justified, Romulus is forever marked by an act of brutal violence. Most importantly, nowhere in this account does Romulus appear to exhibit wisdom, foresight or a well-ordered soul — attributes essential to the prudent statesman. Rather, he is directed by emotion, impulse or the guidance of others. With this in mind, it becomes

⁵⁵ *HR* I.5; *RA* I.79.

⁵⁶ *RA* I.80; Frenzied Haste: *σπουδην μανικωτεραν*. Weisman notes this 'frenzied haste' as a sign of impetuosity. T.P. Wiseman, *Remus: A Roman Myth* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 3.

⁵⁷ *HR* I.5; *RA* I.80.

⁵⁸ *RA* I.84.

⁵⁹ *HR* I.5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Warrior, 'Introduction', p. 11.

⁶² See: B.O. Foster, *Livy's The History of Rome*, Loeb Classical Library (14 vols., Cambridge, 1919); T.J. Luce, *The Rise of Rome: Books 1–5* (Oxford, 1998).

⁶³ *DR* II.4.

clear why Cicero elects to minimize this event. As the traditional archetype of Roman leadership, Romulus' violence and deceit could be used to legitimize acts of political violence and duplicity in the present.

After the killing of King Amulius, Romulus and Remus are 'seized by a desire to establish a city in the places where they had been exposed and raised'.⁶⁴ Neither historian mentions Romulus' wisdom in selecting the city's location. Instead, it seems obvious that he would settle in the area where he was 'preserved and raised'.⁶⁵ Before the city is built, Romulus and Remus are 'interrupted by the ancestral evil that had beset Numitor and Amulius — desire for kingship'.⁶⁶ According to Dionysius: 'The youths themselves, being now no longer one in mind or feeling it necessary to entertain brotherly sentiments toward each other, since each expected to command the other, scorned equality and craved superiority.'⁶⁷ We are also told that 'their unso-cial love of rule began to disclose itself'.⁶⁸ While desire for solitary power plays no role in Cicero's narrative, both historians describe Romulus as driven by a longing for distinction and pre-eminence. This 'desire for king-ship' gives rise to a conflict characterized by Livy as *foedus*: 'loathsome, shameful, or shocking'.⁶⁹ This animosity grows steadily until each brother gathers a band of loyal followers ready to fight on their behalf.

Comparable in both body and mind, Romulus and Remus are forced to turn to augury as the only viable means of determining who should rule. Accord- ing to custom, they agree to grant sovereign power to the person who sees the most birds.⁷⁰ Remus is the first to announce publicly that he has seen six vul- tures. After hearing this, Romulus deceives Remus by claiming that 'twice the number' appeared to him. Remus' resulting anger leads to open conflict between the loyal forces of each brother, and Remus is slain in the battle.⁷¹ Both historians reference 'the more common story'⁷² in which Remus is killed for mocking the diminutive stature of the walls surrounding Romulus' city on the Palatine Hill. Described as 'enraged', Romulus murders his brother and swears to destroy anyone else who dares to 'leap over my walls'.⁷³ Although Romulus shows no remorse in Livy's account, Dionysius explains that 'after

⁶⁴ HR I.6.

⁶⁵ RA I.85.

⁶⁶ HR I.6.

⁶⁷ RA I.85.

⁶⁸ RA I.86.

⁶⁹ Warrior, 'Introduction', p. 12.

⁷⁰ HR I.6; RA I.87.

⁷¹ HR I.7; RA I.87,

⁷² HR I.7.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

[he] had gained a most melancholy victory through the death of his brother' he was filled with 'grief and repentance for what had happened'.⁷⁴

Ultimately, this description of the events leading to Remus' death informs our understanding of the nuanced and morally ambiguous image of Romulus in the Roman cultural memory. Each of the following traits is present in Romulus' behaviour: (1) desire for kingship, (2) propensity for deception (lying about the augury), (3) anger and (4) violence (fratricide). By highlighting these questionable attributes, we can understand Cicero's decision to 'prune' Remus from Scipio's narrative as a calculated attempt to guide the reader's attention away from details that challenge the image of Romulus as an *exemplum* of *prudencia*. Through the omission of such iconic events, Cicero attempts to grant historical legitimacy to his ideal statesman model while simultaneously disassociating Romulus from behaviours — exhibited by contemporary political figures — that are threatening to the stability of the Republic. As such, he draws the reader's attention towards acts of *prudencia* and away from the violence, murder and deception that permeate the traditional Romulus account.

3.2. Romulus' Initial Rule and the Rape of the Sabine Women

Before establishing his city, Romulus makes certain to attend to the religious rites. According to Livy, '[h]e offered sacrifices to the other gods according to the Alban ritual, and to Hercules according to the Greek ritual instituted by Evander'.⁷⁵ Unlike Cicero, Livy is unclear as to whether this emphasis on religious observances is an expression of genuine piety, superstition, or merely an attempt to establish the city's legitimacy by invoking the authority of the gods. While Cicero's Romulus is praised for his wise use of the auspices as a means of maintaining 'public safety', there is no indication of his religious pragmatism in Livy. Even more so, Dionysius describes Romulus as deeply superstitious at the time of the city's founding. He makes sacrifices, takes numerous omens, and 'cause[s] the people to come out and leap over flames in order to expiate their guilt'.⁷⁶ Although one might interpret these actions as pragmatic, there is minimal evidence to support such a claim. While these differences appear trivial, religious superstition and reliance on the gods to direct one's decision-making contradict the wisdom and foresight that characterize the prudent statesman. The man of prudence is not directed or controlled by any external force; rather, he *is* the force that orders and directs the state. Conversely, the leader who relies on the guidance of the gods allows the state to be directed by chance and whim.

⁷⁴ RA I.87.

⁷⁵ HR I.7.

⁷⁶ RA II.88.

Following Livy's account, Romulus gives laws to the people before the city is officially established because 'there was no way other than by law that they could become a unified community'. Rather than attempting to teach his 'rustic population' the usefulness of the laws, Romulus decides to 'make himself venerable by adopting symbols of office' and assuming a more 'impressive style of dress'.⁷⁷ Additionally, he chooses twelve lictors to carry out summary punishments for violations of the law. Nowhere in his account does Livy comment on the wisdom or foresight involved in crafting these laws. Rather, the fact that Romulus makes himself more kinglike and uses fear of punishment indicates that his 'rustic people' were not actually disposed to obey his laws.⁷⁸ In Cicero's account, Romulus is never said to lay down precise laws or exercise physical punishments as a means of maintaining order. Rather, like a true man of *prudencia*, Romulus directs and orders the state according to his own rational judgment with little objection from the people themselves. He wisely augments his authority by instituting the quasi-senate and controlling the auspices. While the true Romulus may have revelled in kingly power and exercised physical punishment to cement his legitimacy, Cicero's model of *prudencia* is ordered by reason and dedicated to the future success of the state.

Diverging from Livy, Dionysius offers a detailed account of Romulus' early rule that presents a compelling contrast to Cicero's narrative. After building the city, Romulus' grandfather (Numitor) advises him to allow the people to choose their system of rule. In an attempt to legitimize his power, Romulus acts as if he is indifferent to rule. He gives a speech in which he explains that 'I am ready to comply with your desire, for I neither consider myself unworthy to command nor refuse to obey'.⁷⁹ Predictably, the people select Romulus as their King and grant him total fiat over laws and customs. Although Romulus defers certain 'powers' to the people and the Senate, this statement is immediately qualified by an enumeration of Romulus' 'royal prerogatives'. Romulus grants himself supremacy in religious matters, control over laws, judicial decisions and customs, and absolute command in war.⁸⁰ While some decisions are deferred to the people and the senate, they are largely symbolic. Any matter of actual importance falls under his authority.⁸¹

Dionysius' Romulus relies heavily on the constitutions of the Athenians and Lacedaemonians, while also improving upon these Greek systems by accepting foreigners and building colonies.⁸² Furthermore, Romulus institutes a series of laws and practices that allow for the physical punishment of wrongdoers. For example, if a client betrays his agreement with a patron, he

⁷⁷ *HR* I.8.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *RA* II.3.

⁸⁰ *RA* II.14.

⁸¹ *RA* II.1–5, II.14.

⁸² *RA* II.7, II.13.

can lawfully be executed on the spot so long as a god is invoked. Additionally, he grants complete authority to fathers in dealing with their children. They are permitted to sell their sons into slavery three times and kill them for any offence.⁸³ Finally, Romulus realizes that:

Nothing restrains men from all evil actions so effectually as fear. . . He contrived many things to inspire it, such as the place where he sat in judgment in the most conspicuous part of the Forum, the very formidable appearance of the soldiers who attended him, three hundred in number, and the rods and axes borne by twelve men [the lictors], who scourged in the Forum those whose offences deserved it and beheaded others in public who were guilty of greater crimes.⁸⁴

Because Dionysius' narrative here diverges somewhat from Livy, it is difficult to gauge how closely the details of these passages cohere to the collective cultural memory. Thus, we must exercise caution in granting too much significance to this account. However, setting specific details aside, Dionysius' general characterization of Romulus' early rule does agree with Livy's interpretation: (1) he legitimizes his authority through fear, deceit and threat of corporal punishment; (2) he grants himself arbitrary power as sole ruler; and (3) he relies on the gods and the judgment of others in making key decisions. Although Dionysius and Livy portray Romulus as a forceful leader, his general character and behaviour fail to comport with Cicero's notion of *prudencia*. The prudent statesman is not cunning or deceitful, he does not rule by fear or violence, and above all, he is not driven by desire for personal distinction or arbitrary power. Ultimately, wisdom, foresight and well-ordered behaviour are markedly absent from these accounts.

Now we turn to an event that dominates assessments of Romulus' character and leadership: the rape of the Sabine women. After establishing the laws and customs, Romulus attempts to augment his population by opening the city's gates to an 'entire rabble of neighboring people'.⁸⁵ After granting asylum to paupers, criminals and slaves, Rome begins to expand. However, because these disaffected masses are predominantly male, the city faces constraints on its population growth. After numerous attempts to co-mingle with neighbouring tribes, Romulus 'hid his resentment and carefully prepared a solemn festival in honor of Neptune' to which he invited the Sabine people.⁸⁶ At the height of the celebration, Romulus gives the 'signal' and the men seize upon the Sabine women in an act of 'pre-arranged violence'.⁸⁷ Although the selection of women is said to be random, the most beautiful among them are hand-selected by Romulus and the leading senators. Despite the reluctance of the

⁸³ RA II.26.

⁸⁴ RA II.29.

⁸⁵ HR I.8.

⁸⁶ HR I.17; RA II.31.

⁸⁷ HR I.9.

Sabine men to challenge the Romans, neighbouring states attack in a fit of ‘burning anger’.⁸⁸ In response, Romulus teaches his enemies ‘the futility of anger without strength’, by killing the king of Caenia ‘with his own hands’⁸⁹ and stripping the armour from his corpse. After his victory, Romulus, ‘no less eager to publicize his achievements, hung the spoils of the slain enemy commander on a frame . . . and went to the capital, carrying it himself’.⁹⁰

The rape of the Sabine women is inextricably linked with the morally ambiguous image of Romulus in the Roman cultural memory. Unlike Cicero’s tame version of events, Livy and Dionysius do not avoid painting Romulus’ actions in an unfavourable light. After failing to *persuade* the neighbouring people, Romulus turns to deception and brute force as a means of securing his end. This ‘pre-arranged violence’ is accomplished through an act of impious deception and a violation of ‘good faith and hospitality’.⁹¹ Even in the minute details of the narrative, Romulus is not portrayed in a positive vein. The fact that he allows the senators to hand select the most beautiful women betrays any justification of the act as one of pure necessity. His eagerness to ‘publicize his achievements’ after killing the king of Caenia reflects a desire for individual distinction that extends beyond his service to the state. Ultimately, this catalogue of questionable behaviour is pruned from Scipio’s account because it appears antithetical to Cicero’s conception of prudent statesmanship. Rather, Scipio’s only reference to the questionable nature of the affair comes in his description of Romulus’ scheme as ‘somewhat crude’. Nowhere in Livy’s or Dionysius’ accounts is the ‘rape’ considered an act of wisdom or foresight. Rather, it is born out of resentment and anger at being rejected by the neighbouring peoples. When attempting to justify his actions to the Sabine women, Romulus ‘[goes] around telling them that this had happened because of their parents’ arrogance’.⁹²

Eventually, the Sabine leaders attack Rome and commence a bloody battle.⁹³ The Sabines pose a significant threat to the Romans because they ‘were not acting through anger or greed’.⁹⁴ In other words, Livy implies that the Sabines act out of reasoned principle and are therefore justified in their attack on the Romans. Before the slaughter reaches its height, the Sabine women enter the fray and beg the armies to stop their fighting. Romulus and Tatius agree to a treaty, which unites the two states and establishes a duel-kingship. After ruling ‘harmoniously’ for several years, Tatius is assassinated for the unjustified

⁸⁸ *HR* I.10; also: *RA* II.32.

⁸⁹ *RA* II.33.

⁹⁰ *HR* I.10.

⁹¹ *HR* I.9.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *RA* II.43–6.

⁹⁴ *HR* I.12.

pardoning of his relatives' murder of foreign envoys.⁹⁵ According to Livy, 'Romulus took this less badly than was proper, whether because of the disloyalty that is inherent in shared rule or because he thought that Tatius' murder was not unjustified'.⁹⁶ After pardoning the assassins, Romulus re-establishes his absolute authority.⁹⁷

Understandably, Livy's explanation for Romulus' reaction to Tatius' death has attracted scholarly attention. Rex Stem argues that Livy presents the moral ambiguity of Romulus' reaction as a choice between two alternatives: either Romulus' desire for solitary power is so intense that his lack of grief at the death of Tatius is considered indecent or he simply felt that Tatius deserved to die for his 'irresponsible decision'.⁹⁸ Ultimately, Livy invites his readers to draw their own conclusions. While Stem⁹⁹ argues that Livy's recounting of the events leading to Tatius' assassination is a subtle endorsement of the 'irresponsible decision' interpretation, Miles¹⁰⁰ and Brown¹⁰¹ assert that Livy's early emphasis on Romulus' 'desire for kingship' suggests a tension between the two rulers. Regardless of the reader's interpretation, Livy's willingness to express conflicting viewpoints further advances the claim that his history presents a more nuanced image of Romulus than that offered by Scipio in *De Republica*. In this respect, his portrayal of Romulus (and that of Dionysius)¹⁰² is more indicative of the collective view of Romulus in the Roman cultural memory.

3.3. *Romulus' Later Rule and 'Mysterious' Disappearance*

The accounts of Romulus' later rule presented in Livy and Dionysius are dominated by violence and war. Although Scipio admits that, '[Romulus] waged many wars against his neighbours', he avoids any explicit description of battles or acts of violence. Rather, this statement is used to demonstrate (1) the wisdom of Romulus' reliance on the quasi-senatorial council and (2) the prudence of his decision-making — 'he continually enriched his citizens while taking for himself none of the plunder'.¹⁰³ Not only does his behaviour appear wise (because it gains him loyal followers), but it also presents Romulus as possessing a well-ordered, rational soul. He is not driven by

⁹⁵ *HR* I.14; *RA* II.51.

⁹⁶ *HR* I.14.

⁹⁷ *RA* II.53.

⁹⁸ Stem, 'Exemplary Lessons', p. 460.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 459–60.

¹⁰⁰ Miles, *Reconstructing Rome*.

¹⁰¹ R. Brown, 'Livy's Sabine Women and the Ideal of Concordia', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 125 (1995), pp. 291–319.

¹⁰² In *RA* 2.51–2, Romulus is described as justified in his disapproval of Tatius' conduct and his lack of remorse at his death.

¹⁰³ *DR* II.15.

desire for personal enrichment or public recognition. In this sense, Cicero omits a well-known element of Romulus' character — his propensity for violence and war — and shapes the narrative to fit his own model of *prudencia*. By turning to Livy and Dionysius, we can gain a better sense of Romulus' war-like character.

Soon after the death of Tatius, the men of Fidenae attack a series of Roman outposts. Romulus 'incensed at this, made an incursion into their territory with considerable force'.¹⁰⁴ After acquiring great spoils, Romulus sets an ambush and makes a 'disorderly and menacing assault'¹⁰⁵ upon the city of Fidenae. In doing so, he 'punish[es] a few of the citizens', divides their territory among his soldiers, and makes the city a Roman colony.¹⁰⁶ Soon after this victory, Romulus takes 'revenge' on the Camerini by 'putting to death the authors of the revolt and permitting his soldiers to plunder the city'.¹⁰⁷ In celebration, Romulus declares his second triumph and builds a statue of himself to document his military accomplishments.¹⁰⁸ In his third major war, Romulus responds to the invasions of soldiers from Veii by attacking with 'sheer force and without employing any strategy . . . [he] prevailed simply by the might of his seasoned army'.¹⁰⁹ As Romulus returns home, 'he plunder[s] their fields, more from a desire for revenge than for booty'.¹¹⁰ According to Dionysius, Romulus' third triumph 'was much more magnificent than either of the former'.¹¹¹ In both accounts, these war-like exploits are described as the final 'accomplishments' of Romulus' reign. Before discussing his mysterious disappearance, Livy offers a summary judgment of Romulus' rule which reinforces his morally ambiguous characterization and hints at the real cause of his death/deification:

Indeed, the strength that he gave to Rome enabled her to have untroubled peace for the next forty years. He was more popular with the people than with the senators. Far above all, however, he was dearest to the hearts of the soldiers. Not only in war, but also in peace, he had 300 armed men as bodyguards, whom he called the Swift Ones.¹¹²

By currying favour with the people and maintaining a loyal army, Romulus circumvented the authority of the senatorial class and in doing so satisfied his desire for consolidated power.

¹⁰⁴ RA II.52; also: HR I.14.

¹⁰⁵ HR I.15.

¹⁰⁶ RA II.53.

¹⁰⁷ RA II.54.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ HR I.15

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ RA II.55.

¹¹² HR I.15; Dionysius also mentions Romulus' personal 'bodyguards' at RA II.29.

Ultimately, the accounts of Romulus' later rule in Livy and Dionysius bring to light character traits that directly contradict Cicero's *prudentia* ideal. First, in the broadest sense, Romulus is rarely — if ever — depicted as ruling his own people after the death of Tatius. Rather, he dedicates the latter period of his reign to fighting foreign enemies, seizing plunder and celebrating military triumphs. As noted, Cicero's prudent statesman is not a man of war; he is a rational man of the mind who engages in war only when necessary. The spoils of battle and the pleasure of revenge play no part in his decision-making. Second, Romulus' success in battle (on more than one occasion) is attributed to 'sheer force' or 'disorderly and menacing assault' rather than a deliberate strategy or pre-determined plan of action. Although Livy and Dionysius highlight Romulus' skill as a military commander, they equally attribute his actions in war to revenge¹¹³ and anger.¹¹⁴ The use of physical force motivated by passion in the absence of wise planning is antithetical to *prudentia*. Reliance on instincts and impulse leads to unpredictable results that are out of the statesman's control. Finally, Romulus is depicted as both (1) desirous of personal distinction and (2) over-reliant on his personal army. The fact that both Livy and Dionysius describe Romulus as 'eager to publicize his achievements' by instituting the practice of public triumphs and erecting monuments in his likeness, demonstrates an evident tension in the popular image of Romulus that problematizes his status as a prudent statesman. Although his actions advance the aims of the state, his focus on self-aggrandizement and public recognition is unbecoming of a prudent statesman. While some might argue that Romulus is merely seeking to inspire other Romans to greatness, the fact that Dionysius mentions three distinct triumphal celebrations, 'each more lavish than the next', suggests an indecorous desire for personal glory. The actions of the prudent statesman, however, are always future-oriented and take little stock in the pleasure of earthly praise. Rather the significant emphasis that Scipio places on Romulus' deification coupled with the protracted account of the eternal reward for prudent statesmanship advanced in Scipio's dream,¹¹⁵ strongly disavows the desire for earthly pre-eminence as a proper motivating force.

Additionally, both historians mention Romulus' personal army and his distribution of money and land to his own men. Numerous references to the distribution of territory and spoils are scattered throughout their accounts of Romulus' later rule.¹¹⁶ Not only does this shape the readers' interpretation of Romulus' 'disappearance', it also implies that he failed to foresee the harm that would befall him for doing so. In Cicero's account, however, Romulus is portrayed as a benevolent leader. He enriches *all* his citizens with the plunders

¹¹³ *HR* I.15; *RA* II.53.

¹¹⁴ *RA* II.52.

¹¹⁵ *DR* Book VI.

¹¹⁶ *RA* II.53; *HR* I.15.

of war and there is no intimation of tension between Romulus and the proto-senatorial council. Ultimately, a close analysis of Livy's and Dionysius' descriptions of Romulus' later rule reveals further evidence of (1) his violent and war-like character, (2) impulsive decision-making, (3) desire for praise and personal distinction, and (4) imprudent loyalty to his personal 'body-guard'. When considered together, these attributes reveal a very different image of Romulus from that offered by Cicero in *De Republica*. However, before we can assess the key character traits of this 'alternative' Romulus, we must first consider his mysterious 'disappearance'.

Due to the unique character of each historian's interpretation of Romulus' 'disappearance', I present them separately here. Livy's account begins with Romulus reviewing his army at a public gathering in the Campus Martius when a sudden storm appears and 'envelop[s] him in a cloud'.¹¹⁷ Unceremoniously, Livy announces that 'from then on Romulus was no longer on Earth'.¹¹⁸ This terse description mirrors the frustration and confusion felt by the people, which leads to a widespread 'panic'. When the clouds disappear, the senators attempt to convince the crowd that Romulus was 'snatched up on high' by the storm. The people pretend to believe this story, but 'nevertheless they remain sorrowful and silent . . . stricken with fear'.¹¹⁹ Livy is unclear as to whether this sorrow stems from feeling 'abandoned' by Romulus or from a more direct fear of senatorial power. The reader is informed that 'some privately claimed that the King had been torn into pieces by the hands of the senators'.¹²⁰ However, there are three particular pieces of evidence that suggest a more widespread knowledge of Romulus' assassination. First, Livy's comment on Romulus' heightened popularity among the people and army highlights a tension between kingly power and senatorial authority that makes the senate's decision to carry out a regicidal conspiracy seem highly plausible. Second, the senators (as a collective body) are directly attributed with introducing the 'theory' of Romulus' deification. More specifically, they are the first to claim that he was 'snatched up on high by the storm', which implies the intervention of some divine agent. This is further substantiated by the fact that Proculus Julius, a man 'of great authority' from the senatorial rank, gives a public speech claiming to have been visited by the deified spirit of Romulus. Livy frames this public address as an act of senatorial propaganda. Finally, Livy ends his account with a statement that throws Romulus' deification into doubt: 'It is astonishing what credence was given to this man's story, and how longing for Romulus felt by the people and army was alleviated by belief in his immortality.'¹²¹ Taken together, this evidence undermines the credibility

¹¹⁷ *HR* I.16.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

of Romulus' deification and in the process paints a more human portrait of his character and actions.

Similar to Livy, Dionysius presents two interpretations of Romulus' disappearance — deification and assassination. However, his support for the latter explanation is more overt. Beginning with 'those who give a rather fabulous account', Dionysius describes the onset of sudden darkness and a violent storm during which Romulus is taken to heaven by his father Mars.¹²² Quite tellingly, Dionysius says nothing more about this interpretation, despite its prominence in the cultural memory. Rather, he turns to 'those who write the more plausible accounts' in an attempt to demonstrate that Romulus was, in fact, murdered by the senators.¹²³ Dionysius goes further than Livy in presenting four pieces of evidence in support of his claim. First, Romulus is said to have angered the senate by releasing hostages without popular consent.¹²⁴ Second, he 'showed great honor' towards original Roman citizens and 'slighted' those who were enrolled later.¹²⁵ Third, he authorized acts of cruelty in the punishment of delinquents. For example, he threw a number of well-born Roman youths off the Tarpeian Rock for stealing from a neighbouring city. Finally, Romulus 'seemed to be harsh and arbitrary and to be exercising his power more like a tyrant than a king'.¹²⁶ Thus, Dionysius seeks to do away with the 'fabulous' depiction of Romulus' death in favour of a more 'plausible' account that better approximates Romulus' true character.

As is evident from these narratives, the tension and confusion surrounding Romulus' 'disappearance' occupies a prominent place in the Roman cultural memory and reinforces the ambiguity of his public image. Furthermore, the morally questionable elements of Romulus' character are also intimately associated with the events surrounding his death. For Cicero, Romulus' status as a viable *exemplum* of *prudentia* is largely contingent on Scipio's defence of his deification. By having Scipio accept Romulus' deification, Cicero signals to his audience that this assumption is essential to the legitimacy of his model of prudent statesmanship. The man of *prudentia* must be *rewarded* for his selfless service to the state. There must be some *summum bonum* — aside from self-sacrificial patriotism — that will compel future statesmen to cultivate the virtues of the *rector* ideal. Death by assassination is not an end befitting the prudent statesman, and the very suggestion that Romulus may have been murdered threatens his status as an *exemplum* worthy of imitation. Rather, it implies that Romulus either failed to foresee his murder at the hands of the Senate and, therefore, lacked prudence, or that, despite his prudence, he

¹²² RA II.56.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

still succumbed to an indiscriminate death. Thus, to avoid this contradiction, Cicero takes great pains to excise the assassination from his narrative.

IV

Caesar as the Antithesis of *Prudentia*

In this final section, I will analyse specific letters from Cicero to Atticus that shed light on his perception of Julius Caesar as the embodiment of anti-prudent statesmanship. Ultimately, I argue that the similarities between Cicero's portrayal of Caesar and the traits he omits from his Romulus account can tell us a great deal about the fears and concerns that motivated his portrayal of Romulus as an *exemplum* of *prudentia*. Although I choose to focus on Caesar as the prime example of Cicero's conception of the anti-prudent statesman, there is much evidence from Cicero's correspondence and speeches prior to the composition of *De Republica* that indicate his life-long fixation with despotic political figures like Caesar. The broad cluster of traits that Cicero removes from his Romulus account (violence, desire for personal distinction, impulsive decision-making, and immoral methods of legitimizing power) are present in his *public* attacks on various contemporary Roman leaders. For example, as early as 70 BC, Cicero accused Verres of inflicting 'numerous and cruel' punishments on Roman citizens, revelling in violence, and engaging in corrupt acts during his tenure as praetor of Sicily.¹²⁷ Similarly, in his *Catilinarian Orations* c.63 BC, Cicero characterizes Catiline as 'mad with audacity, breathing wickedness, impiously planning mischief', 'a most cruel tyrant' and 'luxurious, indolent, and rash'.¹²⁸ He commits open violence against his own blood and is forced to protect himself with a loyal guard of profligate youths.¹²⁹ In the same speeches, he references previous despotic figures — like Cinna, Marius and Sulla — who used cruelty, violence, murder and deception to establish their power.¹³⁰ Ultimately, I argue that Cicero's conception of anti-prudent statesmanship took shape long before the composition of *De Republica*, culminated with his characterization of Caesar in his Letters to Atticus (c.49–45 BC), and continued after Caesar's death with his attack on Marc Antony in the *Philippics* (44–43 BC).

Thus, Cicero held this archetype of 'anti-prudent' statesmanship in mind when crafting his Romulus *exemplum* and was highly motivated to avoid advocating any behaviours that resembled the despotic tendencies of such leaders. Thus, when examining Cicero's comments on Caesar, we must keep in mind the traits of: (1) propensity for violence, (2) desire for kingship and

¹²⁷ Cicero, *Orationes: In Verrem*, trans. Albert Curtis Clark and William Peterson (Oxford, 1905), V.I, LI, LVI, LVIII.

¹²⁸ Cicero, *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, trans. C.D. Yonge and B.A. London (Covent Garden, 1856) (henceforth = *Cat.*), II.I, II.XIII, II.XXIII.

¹²⁹ *Cat.* I.II.

¹³⁰ *Cat.* III.X.

personal distinction, (3) impulsive decision making, and (4) immoral methods of legitimizing power. In what follows, I present Cicero's characterization of Caesar in his *Letters to Atticus* with the goal of demonstrating how his portrayal of Caesar bears striking similarity to the image of Romulus in the Roman collective memory.¹³¹ In this sense, we can better understand Cicero's incentive for crafting an exemplary account of Romulus' life that revises the Roman tradition in service of the future preservation of the Republic. If Rome is to survive, there must be a new archetype of Roman leadership that is not associated with violence, cruelty or morally questionable conduct. As I will show, Cicero sets out to portray Caesar's character as 'un-Roman' and antithetical to the tradition of prudent statesmanship initiated by Romulus.

On 17 January 49 BC, days before Caesar crossed the Rubicon and marched on Rome, Cicero penned a letter to Atticus that described his impression of Caesar's character at length:

Are we talking of a Roman officer or a Hannibal? Wretched madman never to have seen the shadow even of right! Yet all this, he says, is done to support his honor. Can there be honor without honesty: and is it honest to retain an army without sanction, to seize the cities of your country that you may strike the better at her heart, to contrive abolition of debts, the restoration of exiles, and scores of other crimes, 'to win God's greatest gift, a crown?' Well, let him keep his fortune . . . Better a thousand times to die than once to mediate such villainy.¹³²

Although this letter appears to be written in a spontaneous style, many of Cicero's criticisms of Caesar draw evident parallels to the morally ambiguous image of Romulus presented in Livy and Dionysius. First, Caesar is compared to Hannibal, the greatest threat to the Republic in Rome's centuries-long history. Hannibal serves as the perfect *exemplum malum* for Cicero to employ in his chastisement of Caesar.¹³³ The fact that Hannibal was a foreigner with no cultural or moral ties to Rome implies that Caesar has reduced himself to the status of a foreigner by abandoning Roman cultural values, legal institutions and legitimate political processes. His willingness to wage war on his own blood for the sake of a 'crown' demonstrates his lack of virtue and his incompatibility with the prudence requisite of the ideal statesman. In reality, however, Caesar's attacks on his 'own blood' are reminiscent of Romulus' murder of Remus portrayed in Livy and Dionysius.

Second, Caesar is described as a 'wretched madman never to have seen the shadow even of right'. This statement suggests that his actions are driven by

¹³¹ Cicero, *Cicero: Letters to Atticus*, trans. Eric Otto Winstedt (Charleston, 2010) (henceforth = *Ad Att.*).

¹³² *Ad Att.* Jan. 17, 49 BC.

¹³³ I. Goldenhard, 'Reckoning with Tyranny: Greek Thoughts on Caesar in Cicero's Letters to Atticus in Early 49', in *Ancient Tyranny*, ed. Sian Lewis (Edinburgh, 2006), p. 198.

impulse and improper judgment, rather than wisdom and foresight. The fact that Caesar is accused of lacking a proper understanding of 'right' implies that his soul is not well-ordered or directed by reason. In truth, Cicero's mention of 'the shadow' can be read as a reference to Plato's Allegory of the Cave. For Plato, even the most debased human being can view the shadow figures on the wall of the cave as approximations of the good. As Gildenhard explains, 'Caesar's actions, Cicero insinuates, are so evil that, unlike Plato's cave-dwellers, he could not possibly have ever had even an intimation of the idea of the good'.¹³⁴ In this sense, Cicero alienates Caesar from the attributes essential to *prudencia*: wisdom, foresight and the well-ordered soul. Instead, he is reduced to an animalistic spirit led by emotion and impulse.

Third, Cicero's attack on Caesar's honour implies that his power and authority are founded on immoral and illegitimate actions. He justifies this claim by citing examples of Caesar's questionable conduct: (1) he attacks his own cities (fratricide), (2) he maintains a personal army that is more loyal to Caesar than the state (similar to Romulus' 300-man army), and (3) he uses arbitrary power to secure extra-legal favours for his men and loyal supporters. Finally, Cicero cuts to the very core of Caesar's primary motivation: 'To win God's greatest gift, a crown.' Cicero's accusation of Caesar's desire for kingship draws evident comparisons to the claim that Romulus 'scorned equality and craved superiority',¹³⁵ and was consumed by 'desire for kingship'.¹³⁶ Ultimately, this letter accuses Caesar of all four traits 'pruned' from Cicero's account of Romulus: (1) a violent, warlike nature, (2) a desire for kingship and personal distinction, (3) emotional, impulsive decision-making ('madman') and (4) illegitimate means of establishing authority. In this correspondence from 49 BC, we can see Cicero coming to grips with the ultimate manifestation of anti-prudent statesmanship.

Five days later, Cicero composed a letter that voiced additional concerns regarding Caesar's character and motives:

Civil war . . . has not sprung from division among our citizens, but from daring of one abandoned citizen. He is strong in military forces, he attracts adherents by hopes and promises, he covets the whole universe. Rome is delivered to him stripped of defenders, stocked with supplies: one may fear anything from a man who regards her temples and her homes not as his native land, but as his loot. What he will do, and how he will do it, in the absence of House and magistrates, I do not know. He will be unable even to pretend constitutional methods.¹³⁷

Again, Caesar's loyal 'military force' is portrayed as an affront to Roman stability and thus a deliberate decision to place his desire for kingship above his

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *RA* I.85.

¹³⁶ *HR* I.6.

¹³⁷ *Ad Att.* Jan. 22, 49 BC.

duty to the state. Additionally, Cicero implies that the 'hopes and promises' used by Caesar to secure favour are empty acts of deception meant to keep the people loyal until his power is strong enough to rule by fear and punishment. The fact that Caesar 'covets the whole universe' indicates an inability to keep his desires in check and a willingness to satiate his ambition at any cost. Finally, Cicero predicts that Caesar will rule via extra-legal means and thus undermine the authority of the senate, consuls and judges. At the prospect of Caesar's unlimited arbitrary power, Cicero fears both 'what he will do, and how he will do it'. If the republic is placed in the hands of an all-powerful and impulsive tyrant, one can no longer live in safety — especially a man of Cicero's status.¹³⁸ Ultimately, the most telling indictment of Caesar's anti-prudent character comes at the outset of the letter when Cicero calls him an 'abandoned citizen'. The label of 'abandoned' conveys Cicero's belief that Caesar has completely lost touch with his rational nature and his capacity for proper judgment. He has given himself over to every violent, ambitious and cruel impulse in an attempt to fulfil his desire for kingly power.

On 21 January 49 BC, Cicero expressed concern that, 'Caesar, whom you fear may be a Phalaris, will stick at no abominations',¹³⁹ and days later he claimed that '[n]othing can be denied to Caesar . . . the whole bulk of his demands are to be granted. He will be utterly mad to reject the terms [of the peace proposal] particularly when his demands are most imprudent . . . still the demand has cost us more loss of dignity now that he has outraged the sanctity of the state . . . and yet I fear he may want more'.¹⁴⁰ In these letters Caesar is portrayed as a man who (1) employs cruelty in punishment,¹⁴¹ (2) thinks his power to be above the law, (3) allows his desire for personal rule and pre-eminence to usurp his duty to the state, and (4) is ultimately unable to control his ambition. In these letters, Caesar's conduct is described as the antithesis of *prudencia*. He is not ruled by reason, devoted to the state, or in control of his desires. Rather, his behaviour is more akin to the anti-prudent elements of Romulus' character highlighted in the Livy and Dionysius accounts.

This claim is further supported in two additional letters from 49 BC. The first, dated February 9, includes the following warning from Cicero to his friend Atticus: 'There is reason for you to fear butchery, not that anything could be less advantageous to secure Caesar a lasting victory and power; but I see on whose advice he will act.'¹⁴² The second, written months later on 2 May, includes a similar sentiment: 'I foresee a massacre if he conquers, attacks on the wealth of private persons, the recall of exiles, repudiation of

¹³⁸ Gildenhard, 'Reckoning with Tyranny', p. 200.

¹³⁹ *Ad Att.* Jan. 21, 49 BC.

¹⁴⁰ *Ad Att.* Feb. 3, 49 BC.

¹⁴¹ Phalaris was a Sicilian tyrant notorious for burning criminals and dissenters in a molten-hot bronze bull.

¹⁴² *Ad Att.* Feb. 9, 49 BC.

debts, high office for the vilest men, and a tyranny intolerable to a Persian much more to a Roman.¹⁴³ This description of Caesar's propensity for violence and his inevitable rule by fear and harsh punishment echoes the violence and brutality exhibited by Romulus in Livy and Dionysius. Cicero seems to think that Caesar will stop at nothing to secure his 'lasting victory and power'. He will butcher and massacre his own countrymen to see his ambitions fulfilled. Ultimately, this is not a portrait of a rational, contemplative statesman.

After Caesar's ascent to supreme power in 48 BC, Cicero's overt chastisement of Caesar's character and conduct began to disappear from his personal correspondence.¹⁴⁴ Zarecki explains that Cicero refused to support Caesar's rule and thus was relegated to the fringes of public life from 48–44 BC.¹⁴⁵ Most of what we know regarding Cicero's views on Caesar during this period comes from his so-called 'Caesarian speeches' given in Caesar's presence from 47–45 BC. Much scholarship has debated the content and sincerity of these speeches, all of which seem neither to praise Caesar nor condemn his actions outright. Although they are worth mentioning here, a more detailed analysis of the 'Caesarian speeches' extends beyond the scope of this study.

By the end of 45 BC, Cicero abandoned all hope that Caesar might forsake his tyrannical behaviour and emerge as *the* ideal statesman that Rome so desperately required.¹⁴⁶ From 45 BC until Caesar's assassination in 44 BC, Cicero criticized Caesar's character in his letters on only two more occasions. However, each of these statements demonstrates 'a continued hardening of Cicero's opposition to Caesar' and a final reaffirmation of his image of Caesar as the antithesis of *prudencia*.¹⁴⁷ On 13 July 45 BC, Cicero wrote to Atticus, '[w]hat a disgraceful thing a countryman of yours [referring to a Greek architect] enlarges the city, which he had never seen two years ago, and regards it as too small to hold the great man, too!'¹⁴⁸ and on August 7 he quipped: 'Really does Brutus say that Caesar is going to join the optimates? That's good news! But where will he find them? Unless he should by chance hang himself.'¹⁴⁹ Although these criticisms are subtler than his attacks in 49 BC, it is evident that Cicero's attitude towards Caesar's character and behaviour remained consistent throughout his four-year dictatorship at Rome. In the first letter, Cicero's derisive description of Caesar as a 'great man' who is too big for Rome re-affirms the fact that Caesar — in Cicero's mind — has completely undermined the republic in his pursuit of kingship and individual

¹⁴³ *Ad Att.* May 2, 49 BC.

¹⁴⁴ A. Parison, *Cicero and Caesar: A Turbulent Amicitia* (ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 2014), p. 36.

¹⁴⁵ Zarecki, *Cicero's Ideal Statesman*, p. 113.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹⁴⁸ *Ad Att.* July 13, 45 BC.

¹⁴⁹ *Ad Att.* Aug. 7, 45 BC.

preeminence. In this sense, Cicero still regards Caesar as the embodiment of the anti-prudent statesman — a man who is ruled by his desires and thus devoid of wisdom and foresight. Similarly, the second letter reveals a lingering bitterness towards Caesar for his cruel treatment of the optimates and his propensity to favour the loyalty of the masses and his personal soldiers over the stability of the republic.

Ultimately, a close examination of Cicero's *Letters to Atticus* sheds light on his personal image of Caesar's character and behaviour. As demonstrated, the evident parallels between Cicero's portrayal of Caesar and the traits omitted from his account of Romulus in *De Republica* reveal a great deal about the fears and concerns that motivated his representation of Romulus as an *exemplum* of *prudentia*. Caesar's (1) propensity for violence and war, (2) desire for kingship and personal distinction, (3) emotional, impulsive decision making, and (4) morally questionable methods of legitimizing power, reveal the despotic character traits that Cicero was desperate to 'prune' from his Romulus account. Ultimately, Cicero's fixation on the character of despotic statesmen continued after Caesar's death with his attacks on Marc Antony. In the *Philippics*, Cicero accuses Antony of ruling by fear,¹⁵⁰ seeking glory and absolute power,¹⁵¹ engaging in cruel and lecherous acts,¹⁵² conducting traitorous campaigns against his fellow Romans,¹⁵³ and ultimately lacking reason and general intelligence.¹⁵⁴ Until his assassination in 43 BC, Cicero continued to combat Antony's despotic rule by framing his character and behaviour as the antithesis of *prudentia*.

Conclusion

By examining Cicero's portrayal of Romulus as an *exemplum* of *prudentia*, I have endeavoured to advance current scholarship on Cicero's process of shaping and employing *exempla* within his political writings. More specifically, this study has demonstrated that a close examination of the more nuanced accounts of Romulus in Livy and Dionysius reveals specific traits and actions, omitted from Cicero's dialogue, that are antithetical to *prudentia* — the fundamental virtue of the ideal statesman. I assert that by crafting an image of Romulus that challenges his morally ambiguous portrayal in the collective cultural memory, Cicero intends to re-write Roman history and, in doing so, frame his *rector* ideal as the 'traditional' archetype of Roman statesmanship. Cicero's attempt to avoid the despotic elements of the traditional Romulus account, while simultaneously attributing Romulus' success to his exemplary

¹⁵⁰ Cicero, *Philippics 1–6*, ed. and trans. D.R. Shackleton Bailey, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA, 2010) (henceforth = *Phil.*), I.XIV.

¹⁵¹ *Phil.* I.XIV, II.XIX, II.XLVI.

¹⁵² *Phil.* II.XX, II.XXIV, II.XLV.

¹⁵³ *Phil.* II.XXII, II.XXIV.

¹⁵⁴ *Phil.* II.XXVIII, II.XLV.

prudentia, reveals his persistent fear of the violence, cruelty and deception employed by political actors whom he perceived as motivated by desire for personal distinction and absolute power. As a result, he demonstrates that the virtuous qualities of his ideal statesman are more in-line with traditional Roman leadership than the traits exhibited by dangerous figures like Sulla, Caesar and Antony — all of whom show similarities to the popular image of Romulus. Ultimately, Cicero legitimizes his prescriptive model for current and future statesmen, and the virtue of *prudentia* in particular, by establishing its fundamental ‘Romanness’.

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