ROMULUS, REMUS AND THE FOUNDATION OF ROME

Besides Aeneas, there were always Romulus and Remus. The existence of this second foundation myth posed two important problems to scholars. How strong were its credentials, and how should it be analysed? On the first point, notably, considerable progress has been made in recent times. Since the late nineteenth century many scholars have repeatedly argued that the story was a literary fabrication, and consequently spent a great deal of effort on rigorous Quellenkritik. The culmination of this scepticism was the powerful attack on the authenticity of the Romulus story by Hermann Strassburger, who argued that all the literary evidence concerning the twins was late, and, moreover, an invention of anti-Roman propaganda. His attack has been convincingly refuted by T. J. Comell, whose careful analysis well sums up the discussions of the past century.

Comell arrived at the following conclusions. First, the story of Romulus and Remus as founders of Rome was already well established by the beginning of the third century BC. The brothers are mentioned by Callias, the court historian of the Sicilian tyrant Agathocles who died in 289 BC. At about the same time, in the year 296 BC, the brothers Ogulnius set up a bronze statue group of the twins beneath a she-wolf near the ficus Ruminalis. Somewhat later, most likely in 269, this statue figured on the reverse type of one of the earliest Roman silver coins. We could even reach a much higher date if we were sure of the date and function of the famous 'Capitoline Wolf' which is preserved in the Palazzo dei Conservatori. But even though the she-wolf has clearly distended udders, this alone is not sufficient evidence of the myth's early existence; other explanations, such as that the statue was a symbol of courage, cannot be excluded.'

As regards Greek historiography of earlier (and later) periods, the absence of the twins is due to various causes. For a long time, Rome was no more than a far-away place whose local traditions were only of marginal interest to the Greeks (cf. pp.19ff). It was only the four-century historian Timaeus who changed this pattern by a systematic investigation into Roman history and institutions. Later Greek historians, however, continued to approach early Roman history in a completely independent way which did not necessarily respect indigenous opinion.

Whereas Comell analysed in great detail the traditions of the Roman foundation myth, he was much briefer in his discussion of the actual story. He argued that the concept of the twins owed its existence to the dual organization of archaic Rome. He also showed that the exposure

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2 On the older discussions see H. J. Erasmus, The Origins of Rome in Historiographies from Petrarch to Perizonius (Diss. Leiden, 1962), with the review by A. Momigliano, Terzo Contributo I (Rome. 1966). 769-774.


5 Cf. M. Crawford. RRC 1, 137, 150, ii. 714; Dulière. Lupa Romana. 43-62.

motif and the brigandage practised by the twins can be paralleled by examples from other Italic communities and were not derived from Greek literary models. He finally mentioned with approval the great importance Binder and Alfoldi attached to the role of the *Jungmannschaft*, but did not elaborate the subject."

The brevity of the discussion of the actual content is not surprising, since, curiously enough, there has not yet been a modern analysis which discusses the main episodes of the foundation myth in a detailed way. The aim of this study is to give such an account, focussing primarily on the various motifs of the early versions of the myth and their interrelationship, which makes use of the insights into myth and ritual as developed by Walter Burkert and others: the necessary regard for the chronology of the traditions will not be neglected.

1. **A hero's life**

Sometimes a pearl can be found among swine. The Austrian Generalkonsul Johan Georg von Hahn, who died in 1869, had long been a meritorious collector of Greek and Albanian fairy-tales until he felt himself attracted to mythology. His most important work in this area, a comparison of Germanic and Greek myths, was posthumously published in 1876. The result makes for depressing reading. Von Hahn was a dedicated follower of Max Müller's nature paradigm and saw the sun, moon and other natural phenomena in literally every single god and hero. Out of the blue, however, there appears a table which summarizes the biographies of fourteen heroes under the caption 'Arische Aussetzungs- und Rückkehr-Formel'. "Here such diverse heroes as the Roman Romulus and Remus, the Persian Cyrus, the Germanic Siegfried and Dietrich, and the Indian Krishna were fitted into one scheme by dividing their life according to the following headings:'"

**Birth**

1. Principal hero illegitimate
2. Mother, daughter of native prince
3. Father, a god or stranger

**Youth**

4. Omen to a parent
5. Hero, in consequence, exposed
6. Suckled by animals
7. Reared by childless herdsman
8. Arrogance of the youth
9. Service abroad

**Return**

10. Triumphant homecoming, and return from abroad
11. Fall of the persecutor; acquisition of sovereignty; liberation of mother
12. Foundation of a city

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13. Extraordinary death

Subordinate figures

14. Slandered or incestuous and early death
15. Vengeance of the injured servant
16. Murder of the younger brother

Subsequent studies have added heroes, altered details, but not fundamentally changed the pattern of which the validity has been widely recognized." Various explanations in Freudian, ritualistic, and more or less Jungian keys have been proposed, but none so far very satisfying. Yet it is clear that Von Hahn's scheme is a very useful tool in analysing the lives of Romulus and Remus. The unmistakable resemblances with other Indo-European heroes will supply helpful parallels in order to reach a better understanding of the Roman myth; the analysis of the Roman myth can contribute to a better understanding of other lives, Indo-European or not. At the same time, we must be careful not to use the scheme too schematically. Von Hahn did not distinguish between younger and older layers of the individual lives, and various scholars have indeed defended the organic unity of the heroic legends, but it can hardly be doubted that some, such as the Siegfried story, gradually grew in size; a chronological determination of the individual motifs remains necessary."

We must beware also of limiting ourselves to fitting the Roman foundation myth into an international biographical pattern. The Romulus and Remus story was handed down because it had a meaning in terms of the Roman cultural matrix. Consequently, we will first look for Roman or Italic parallels, even though these may be of a somewhat later date than the period of the myth's origin. These preliminary considerations may be sufficient for the moment: the proof of the pudding lies in the eating, not in the recipe. Let us therefore turn to the actual story and start with the events leading up to the twins' birth.

2. The mother's tragedy and the exposure

In the second half of the third century the poet Naevius already depicted Romulus as a grandson of Aeneas (see p. 22), but his contemporary Fabius Pictor related a different story which became the 'vulgate' in Rome. After the king of Alba had died, his two sons divided the possessions and the kingship between them. The younger son, Amulius, chose the gold, but afterwards robbed the older one, Numitor, of his royal power. Moreover, being afraid that Numitor's daughter Ilia might bear a son, he made her a Vestal virgin. When sometime later Ilia fetched some water from a sacred grove, she was raped by the god Mars. A pregnancy followed which Ilia tried to conceal in vain. However, before Amulius had fully realised the


problem. The twins had already arrived. The unfortunate mother was killed or, according to others, kept in imprisonment until Amulius' death; Romulus and Remus were exposed."

The final form in which this story has come down to us cannot be very early. The name Ilia clearly testifies to the impact which the Aeneas version of Rome's foundation had made and thus belongs to the third century (Chapter 2). At first sight, the fatherhood of Mars also looks like a recent invention, since it is well known that early Roman religion was aniconic. However, this does not necessarily imply that early Rome also lacked anthropomorphic gods, although this conclusion has often been drawn. Mars stands clearly against such an inference. The *carmen arvale*, our earliest extended text in Latin, invoked the god as *fere Mars* and asked him to leap onto the threshold. And before a war was started, the god was admonished to be vigilant: *Mars, vigilā*. In fact, as Versnel notes, 'it is very hard to imagine that even in the remotest period the god Mars was not conceived in the shape of a warrior', that means to say in the shape of a real person." Admittedly, these examples do not prove that the role of Mars in this particular myth was old, but the connection of Mars with wolves, youths and new beginnings (§ 5) strongly points to an original association of the god with the twins. Finally, the names of Numitor and Amulius are both of Etruscan origin and probably belong to 'an old stratum of oral tradition'." Even though, then, the name of the mother is a relatively late element. Numitor, Amulius and Mars look like being part of the original story whose date will be discussed later (§ 8).

The fate of Ilia was not unique. Many Greek heroines suffered a similar experience. Take Danae for example. An oracle told her father Acrisius that his grandson would kill him. He locked up his daughter in a subterranean vault — a clear reflection of initiatory rites as Frazer already saw. Such a reflection is hardly surprising. So long as girls had to pass through initiatory rites on the way to motherhood, it was only to be expected that these rites should be found in tales about motherhood. However, the exclusion did not stop Zeus from approaching her in the shape of golden rain. In due time, the natural consequences of this meeting were thus belongs to the third century (Chapter 2). At first sight, the fatherhood of Mars also looks like a recent invention, since it is well known that early Roman religion was aniconic. However, this does not necessarily imply that early Rome also lacked anthropomorphic gods, although this conclusion has often been drawn. Mars stands clearly against such an inference. The *carmen arvale*, our earliest extended text in Latin, invoked the god as *fere Mars* and asked him to leap onto the threshold. And before a war was started, the god was admonished to be vigilant: *Mars, vigilā*. In fact, as Versnel notes, 'it is very hard to imagine that even in the remotest period the god Mars was not conceived in the shape of a warrior', that means to say in the shape of a real person." Admittedly, these examples do not prove that the role of Mars in this particular myth was old, but the connection of Mars with wolves, youths and new beginnings (§ 5) strongly points to an original association of the god with the twins. Finally, the names of Numitor and Amulius are both of Etruscan origin and probably belong to 'an old stratum of oral tradition'." Even though, then, the name of the mother is a relatively late element. Numitor, Amulius and Mars look like being part of the original story whose date will be discussed later (§ 8).

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A similar structure occurs in the story of Auge, the mother of Telephus. When Aleus, king of Tegea, heard that his daughter's son was destined to kill his maternal uncles, he appointed his daughter a priestess of Athena. For a while, his daughter remained chaste, until Heracles arrived and flushed with wine, raped her beside a fountain. When the king heard that his daughter was expecting, he arranged for her to be drowned in the sea. On the way to the coast, however, Auge managed to be alone for a moment and gave birth to a son in a thicket. The guard sold Auge to strangers, but the son Telephus was saved by a doe. In the end, Telephus

16 Ogilvie on Liv. 1. 3. 10: see also Schroder. *Cato*, 150: this chapter. n. 86.
married the daughter of the Mysian king who had taken his mother as wife. Similar tales are related about the mothers of other important heroes: Callisto, the mother of Arcas, ancestor of the Arcadians; Io, the mother of Epaphos, ancestor of the Danai; Tyro, mother of Pelias and Neleus, the kings of Iolcos and Pylos; Melanippe, the mother of Boeotus and Aeolus, ancestors of the Boeotians and Aeolians; Antiope, mother of Zethos and Amphion, the founders of Thebes. Like Auge at Tegea, some girls were priestess of their city's most important goddess: Io of Hera at Argos, and Ilia of Vesta at Rome. Daughters of kings do not become priestesses of insignificant gods.

Walter Burkert has well seen that all these tales adopt themselves to a similar pattern: the girl's separation from home, seclusion, rape, tribulation of the mother, and rescue. Burkert, who calls the pattern 'the girl's tragedy', has also proposed an explanation: 'the girl's tragedy can be seen to reflect initiation rituals: but these in turn are determined by the natural sequence of puberty, defloration, pregnancy, and delivery. If, as observed in certain tribes, the girl has to leave her father's house at first menstruation and only acquires full adult status with the birth of a son, the correspondence of the tale structure is almost perfect.' Elsewhere, he has called Otto Rank's Freudian explanation of the 'Aryan expulsion and return formula', which traces the stories back to the Oedipal (excusez le mot) father-son conflict, one of the most solid results of the psycho-analytic interpretations of myth. Both explanations seem debatable. Rank justified his interpretation by a now familiar psycho-analytic sleight of hand. Having realised that a father-son conflict is absent in virtually all of the tales discussed (the exception is Oedipus), he postulated an 'psychologisch (!) ursprünglicheren Form' in which the father was still the persecutor. Needless to say, there is no evidence whatsoever that such an older type ever existed: his other arguments are of the same quality. Burkert's own explanation of the first part of the formula as 'the girl's tragedy' also seems problematic. Since in some cases the mother of the hero is already married: Mandane, the mother of Cyrus, and Sisibe, the mother of Siegfried; other heroines are not rescued at all: Callisto is shot having been transformed into a bear, and Ilia is drowned.' Even if it is true that the tales respect the parameters of a girl's life, such as puberty and pregnancy — but why shouldn't they? — these parameters do not explain the great suffering of the mothers. We need only think of Callisto's transformation into a bear or Io's metamorphosis into a cow to realise that these girls suffer far beyond normal human measure.


Apparently, great heroes come into being during periods of intense crisis and transition in their mother’s lives and they become the more extraordinary thanks to their mothers’ hardships.25

Otto Rank rightly noted the prominence of grandfathers in the exposure legends. Instead of identifying these (mainly maternal) grandfathers with the real father as Rank did, we should observe the difference between the two. In Greece, as in Rome, a boy usually had a much better relationship with his maternal grandfather than with his own father. The animosity of the maternal grandfather therefore fits neatly in the pattern we have discussed. The marginality of the hero is stressed through the rejection by the person who normally should have loved him most. In the case of Romulus and Remus there is a somewhat different situation. Ili is the victim of her father’s brother, the patrueus — in Rome always a type of severity. The rejection of the Roman twins, then, is less marked than in most Greek versions of the exposure legend.26

Romulus and Remus were not the only foundlings to survive. The careers of Sargon of Akkad, Cyrus. Perseus and Pope Gregory, amongst many others, show that this motif is very widespread. In some cases the miraculous salvation is even stressed by the addition of an escape from other dangers as well. Moses, for example, not only survived his exposure in the river but also the murder of Israel’s children by the Pharaoh (Exodus 1.2), and the latter motif returns in the childhood stories of Jesus who survived the murder of the children of Bethlehem (Matthew 2). It is remarkable that we encounter the same motif amongst the legends surrounding Augustus’ birth. One of his freedmen, the Syrian (!) Marathus, related that some months before the emperor’s birth an omen was observed predicting the birth of a king. Subsequently the senate decreed that no boy born that year should be reared, but ‘those whose wives were pregnant saw to it that the decree was not filed in the treasury, since each one hoped that the prediction applied to himself’ (Suetonius Aug. 94).27

Recent decades have shown that it is especially the statesman in exile or seclusion who is apt to be recalled to power in order to remove the chaos: De Gaulle, Karamanlis, Khomeini. The move from the margin to the center is also a traditional part of the lives of religious innovators such as Jesus, Mohammed and Buddha.28 The pattern evidently reflects a culturally widespread feeling that innovation and renewal do not come from the established powers but from the margin. It seems therefore natural to interpret the beginning of the tales discussed as a narrative ploy. The rise to power of the hero within the community acquires greater relief from the stress on his earlier marginality and rejection from that community.

3. Coming of Age in Latium

After the exposure, the twins were suckled by a she-wolf. To the Romans, the wolf was typical for the non-civilised world, a symbol of the ‘Sphäre des unheimlichen Draussen’. Obsequens and Livy supply many examples of wolves entering the city — an entry which usually signified


bad news. At the same time, the wolf was also the animal *par excellence* of Mars, a god closely connected with the world of nature (§ 5). In the case of the twins, the association with Mars was clarified by the addition of the woodpecker, as helper of the she-wolf likewise associated with Mars.” Evidently, the Romans wanted to stress the close connection of the twins with Mars.

Many Asian peoples derive their origin from a wolf as ancestor. In this respect the Roman version is already more ‘civilised’, and its closest parallels can be found in Greece. The Cretan Miletos was the son of Apollo and a nymph, who, fearing the wrath of her father, exposed her baby in the woods. The god sent some wolves to feed the boy until shepherds came who raised him. When Miletos had grown up, he fled from Crete to Asia Minor where he founded the homonymous city. Our oldest source, Herodorus (about 400 BC), does not mention the wolves or the education by shepherds, but these details do occur in the version of Antoninus Liberalis who wrote in the mid second century AD and must have been well acquainted with the Roman foundation myth; even his source Nicander, who wrote in the mid second century BC, could well have been exposed to strong Roman influence, as Jacoby long since observed.

Secondly, in a story localised in Arcadia, Lykastos and Parrhasios were the children of Ares and the local nymph Phylonome. Out of fear of her father, the nymph exposed the twins in the river Erymanthos, but they landed safely on one of the banks where a she-wolf fed them. After a while, a shepherd, Tyliphos, found them and raised them as his own children. When the twins had grown up, they became the chiefs of the Arcadians. Our earliest authority for this story is only ‘Zopyros of Byzantium’, one of the *Schwindelautoren* cited by Pseudo-Plutarch: that is calculated to discourage any confidence in the antiquity, independence and authority of the tale. Miletos and the Arcadian twin in fact represent eloquent testimony to the impact of Romulus and Remus upon the imagination of the lesser Greek mythographers of the Imperial period. They are calques not parallels, alas.?

As soon as the twins were ready to be weaned, they were found by the shepherd Faustulus. His name has repeatedly been connected with the god Faunus, and interesting observations have been made on the association of the twins with the Roman equivalent of the Greek god Pan. However, the connection of Faustulus with *faustus* is unimpeachable; speculations based upon other etymologies have therefore to be rejected. We can only say with some certainty that Faustulus’ place in the story is old.

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The same cannot be said of his wife. Acca Larentia, who is mentioned first by Ennius. Evidently, a more enlightened age had become sceptical about she-wolves suckling twins and looked for a more acceptable version. To that end a whore was introduced into the story, since the Romans used the same term (*lupa*) for she-wolves and prostitutes. The only whore available in Roman mythology was Acca Larentia, a girl who had pleased Hercules and greatly enriched the Roman state; the choice must have been evident. At first sight, the close connection of the twins with a prostitute looks hardly acceptable for the reputable Romans, but among various peoples the marginal origin of a later king or hero was stressed by letting him descend from a whore. In the Old Testament, the judge Jephtha is the son of a harlot (Judges 11.1). Euraud, the founder of the Persian Orontid dynasty, was born out of wedlock from a mother who is described as 'libidinous'. Lamissio, one of the Lombard chiefs (a king?) during their early wanderings, was the son of a whore (*meretrix*) and in addition exposed in a pond, and in the Middle Ages to be 'a son of a bitch' was even considered to be a good omen. We may compare the case of Servius Tullius who was reputed to be the son of a slave, but who became in many ways the second founder of Rome.

The introduction of Acca clearly shows how deeply rooted the she-wolf was: even a more rationalistic age could not present the story without a *lupa*. We do not know when the discussion about the circumstances of the birth started. An inscription found on Chios in the nineteen-fifties, which most likely dates from about 190 BC, mentions the raising of a relief depicting the birth of the twins in such a way which 'one would rightly reckon to be true'. Are these words perhaps a reference to the debate?

The twins grew up under the guardianship of Faustulus and other shepherds. The education is not without parallels. even in Italy. The first king of Alba, Silvius, was born 'in the house of the shepherd Tyrthhus'. However, his name, which is found only in later sources, looks too transparent not to be a late invention, and his story is probably modelled on the Roman foundation myth. On the other hand, the myth of the founder of Praeneste, Caeculus, who was also raised in pastoral surroundings, looks at least partially authentic (Chapter 4).

In Greek mythology we find Paris raised among shepherds. as were Amphion and Zethos, the founders of Thebes, and Neleus and Pelias, the sons of Antiope. The connection between noble youths and shepherds is already found in the *Iliad* where Achilles confronted Aeneas when shepherding (20.91), and killed the brothers of Andromache when they were herding cattle (6.423f); in the *Odyssey*, Athena transformed herself into a royal shepherd boy (13.223). Apparently, it was the 'career' of royal adolescents to spend some time among

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52 Acca Larentia: Ogilvie on Liv. 1.4, 7 (with earlier bibliography); add D. Sabbatucci, *Il mito di Acca Larentia*. *SMSR* 29 (1958), 41-76: Monigliano, *Quarto contributo* (Rome, 1969), 471-79 (1st ed. 1939); G. Radke, 'Acca Larentia und die fratre Arvales', ANRW 1.2 (1972), 421-41; F. Courerli, *I Foro Romano* (Rome, 1983), 261-282. Skutsch on Enn. A.1. xliiv rightly stresses that the testimony of the OGR (20.3) that Acca figured in Ennius should now be accepted; his suggestion that after the introduction of Acca another *lupa* was postulated in Rome's mythological past is uncanonical.


54 Faustulus: Richard on OGR p.172 with all texts. Education among shepherds: Liv. 1.4.8; Plut. *Rom.* 6; Just. 43. 2.6. X Flor. *Epit.* 1.1.5. Silvius: Schwagler. RG. 337f; already saw that the tradition regarding Silvius was late; see also Ogilvie on Liv. 1.3.4.6. Schröder, *Cato*, 131-6. persuasively argues that Silvius did not occur in Cato (F 14P) as has always been accepted.
shepherds outside civilisation. It fits perfectly into this custom that Apollo, a god closely connected with initiation, also had to herd himself."

Many Iranian kings were raised in similar conditions. Herodotus (1, 110-14) relates how Cyrus grew up among shepherds until his tenth year. Artashes II, successor to the Orontid dynasty and focus of many Armenian legends, was brought up in the cottages of shepherds and herdsmen. Artashir, the founder of the Sassanian dynasty, was reputedly the son of a shepherd and suckled by a goat. And finally, according to the Shahname, the national Iranian epic, the legendary king Kai Khushro was also brought up among shepherds and, like Cyrus, showed his qualities at the age of ten. The Iranist Widengren has rightly compared these traditions with reports that Persian youths underwent a severe training in areas outside civilisation. As Strabo (15. 3. 18) noted, it was pan of their initiation to wander through woods and mountains, and to eat wild fruits and acorns. The raising by shepherds, then, is the mythical reflection of this education. It seems reasonable to ascribe a similar meaning to the Greek and Roman myths. since Mediterranean shepherds are typically people of the marginal areas. This part of the Roman foundation myth evidently reflects an Indo-European coming of age ritual which disappeared at an early moment in Roman history.

There is one other element in the education of Romulus and Remus which suggests an origin in the archaic age. Eutropius pictures Romulus as a cattle-stealer, and Schwegler already suggested that the traditions in which Romulus helped shepherds against rustlers were later transformations of tales in which the founder of Rome himself participated in cattle-lifting. Raids for cattle can hardly have been a rare occurrence at a time when cattle were still one of the main sources of movable wealth. and wars were carried on mainly for the acquisition of booty: the death of Tatius was explained as caused by a raid in which his friends had abducted some herds."

The involvement of youth in cattle-raids appears also among other early Indo-European societies. Raiding was one of the activities of the Greeks before Troy and we hear Achilles boasting about his theft of Aeneas' oxen (11. 20. 188-190). His was the act of a fully qualified warrior, but elsewhere cattle-rustling is ascribed to novices. When the embassy of the Greeks besought Achilles to return to the battle-field. Nestor told how he, still very young. had taken part with others — the youth of Pylos? — in a cattle-raid against the Eleans. From the sequel we learn that he was not yet entitled to carry heavy arms according to his father Neleus. Evidently, the whole episode relates Nestor's coming of age and has an initiatory background."


As regards the Germanic peoples, Caesar (BG 6. 23. 6) relates that 'acts of banditry which take place outside the boundaries of each people carry no infamy; and they claim that these acts take place in order to train the young men and to reduce sloth' (atque ea inventutus exercendae ac desidia minuendae causa fieri praedicant). It is important to note that participation was obligatory, since the stay-at-homes were reckoned among 'the ranks of desertors and traitors'; the forays probably had an initiatory character. The object of these raids very often was cattle, 'the only and most welcome riches' of the Germans, as was the case when the Sygambri crossed the Rine to pillage the Eburones and 'seized a great quantity of cattle, for which the barbarians are most greedy' (BG 6. 35. 6).

Among the ancient Celts, the Irish have preserved vivid memories of the times in which cattle-raids were an honourable activity. The most famous raid is the Tain ho Cuailnge which recounts the initiatory geste of the great Ulster hero Cuchulain, but the titles of a great number of similar epics have survived, though the contents are now irretrievably lost. These poems originally narrated the raiding of cattle, but in the final form that we have this subject is already vanishing into the background. Around the year 1000 AD the word for raid, tain, had virtually disappeared and was replaced by crech, a word which contains a pejorative undertone absent in tain. As much earlier in mainland Gaul, the cattle-raid had gradually given way to different forms of warrior exploits, forms that were better adapted to a society in which cattle were no longer the main expression of wealth.62

We are much less well informed about the activities of the Indo-Iranian youth, but the Veda knows of an autonomous group of young men, the Marut, who function as the retinue of the god Indra and help him to steal cattle. Also the Avesta relates that the booty of the initiatory bands, the mairya, consisted of cattle.41 The comparative evidence, then, helps to support the idea that in the early versions of the myth cattle-stealing was part of the coming of age of Romulus and Remus.44

4. The Killing of Remus

Having been educated by the shepherds, the twins managed eventually to kill their uncle and to restore their grandfather Numitor to the throne. Contrary to what one would expect, Romulus and Remus did not stay in Alba but moved back to Rome to found a new city. Here the twins started to quarrel and when Remus jumped over the new city wall in defiance of his brother, Romulus killed him. The murder is already mentioned in Ennius (Ann. 94f Skutsch) and constitutes an integral part of the legend in later times, even though more recent generations, apparently unlike Ennius, either blamed Romulus for Remus' death or tried to exculpate him.35


44 For the sections on cattle-raiding and the asylum (§ 5), I have drawn on my 'The suodales of Poplio Valesios', ZPE 47 (1982), 133-147, but without additions and revisions.

45 For the praise or blame of Romulus, see most recently the detailed survey by H. J. Kramer, in H. Flashar/K. Gaiser (edd.), Synesia. Festgabe für Wolfgang Schadewaldt (Pfullingen, 1965), 355-402.
The manner of Remus' death is intriguing and Ogilvie (on Liv. 1, 6, 3) has argued that 'the evil consequences which attend contempt of walls is Greek in origin, recalling the tale of Poimandros and Leukippos or Oeneus and Toxeus.' How close are these Greek parallels? Plutarch (Mor. 299C) relates the following Boeotian myth about king Poimandros who had fortified Poimandria. 'Polycrithus the master-builder, however, who was present, spoke slightingly of the fortifications and, in derision, leaped over the moat. Poimandros was enraged and hastened to throw at him a great stone which had been hidden there from ancient days, set aside for use in the ritual of the Nyctelia. This stone Poimandros snatched up in his ignorance, and hurled. He missed Polycrithus, but slew his son Leucippus' (tr. F. Babbitt, Loeb).

The resemblance with Remus' death is striking, but a recently published papyrus relates a rather different version: 'by Amphitrion... Rhianus, in the...th book of the Heracleia (Suppl. Hell. no. 715 Lloyd-Jones/Parsons), says that Poimandros married Stratonicke. the daughter of Euonymus (?), and begot three sons. Anchippus (?), Ephippus and Leukippus, and two daughters, Rhexipyle (?) and Archeptoleme. Aristophanes, in the first book of the Boeotika, says that Ephippus who jumped over [the ditch] lost his life at the hands of his father Poimandrus, as is the prevailing opinion. He also says that Toxeus lost his life in the same circumstances at the hand of his father Oeneus [cf. Apollod. 1, 8. 1 with no further details]. So g...46 Unfortunately, the lacuna has not yet been satisfactorily filled in, and the papyrus continues: 'As regards Poimandros, he says, when he encircled the city with a ditch, his son Ephippus claimed that he [ie Ephippus] could easily leap over the ditch. When Poimandros forbade it and Ephippus leaped across, then...'46 Here the papyrus maddeningly breaks off. It is impossible to date the content of the papyrus, apart from its palaeographical date (II/III AD). According to its editor (note 47), the text is a commentary on Lycophron 326 where Polyxena is sacrificed 'into a deep poimandria (ditch)', but the mention of Amphitrion at the beginning of the papyrus really speaks against this suggestion. If Lycophron's poimandria recalls Poimandrus' ditch (which it could, in theory. regardless of whether or not the papyrus is a commentary on Lyc. 326), then Ephippus' jump (and thus a Greek parallel for the death of Remus) would have been known as early as the first half of the third century BC. Moreover, the Aristophanes mentioned in the first account is quoted twice by Plutarch (Mor. 864D, 866/7) and will hardly have been a contemporary: Jacoby (on FGrH 369) dates him to about 400 BC, but offers no real evidence for this contention. It is then reasonable to accept the existence of a Greek parallel for the manner of Remus' death. On the other hand, the Greek slanderer was not killed, and Remus jumped a wall, although Plutarch lets him jump a moat — surely in imitation of the Boeotian myth. Puce Ogilvie, then, these stories do not fully explain the manner of Remus' death.48

In his discussion of the Roman triumph. H. S. Versnel also made the comparison between Poimandros and Remus but he arrived at this point by a completely different route. Having observed that the Roman triumphator entered Rome through a special gate, which was opened only for this ceremony and not used at any other time, he pointed to the related ritual for the winners of the Olympic games. The Olympic victors were allowed to enter their native city through a gap in the wall, which was especially made for the occasion; this special entry, the

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46 The first editor (see next note) assumes a change of source at this point. but this is unlikely because of the gap in line 24.

47 P.0.y. 2463, ed. and tr. J. Rea, although I follow the interpretation of E. G. Turner in line 24ff. The papyrus has been overlooked by H. Beister. 'Probleme bei der Lokalisierung des homerischen Graia in Booten'. in G. Argoud and P. Roesch (edd.). La Béotie antique (Paris. 1985). 131-36, esp. 132f. I am most grateful to Albert Henrichs for discussing this papyrus with me (letter 6 February 1986).

eiselasis, was even so characteristic for the victor that numerous other games were called agones eiselastikoi in later times. Moreover, the relation between the Greek and Roman ritual was already perceived by the Greeks themselves, as they used the term eiselasis/eiseleusno for the Roman triumph. On the basis of this comparison, Versnel suggests that in both cases the wall forms a magic circle which ensured 'the continued presence of the ntana-bearer and of the blessing he brought upon the city.' The death of Remus was the fatal consequence of breaking this magic of the wall, as were the deaths of Leucippus and Toxeus, and the illness of Miltiades who jumped over the wall of Demeter's Parian sanctuary."

Versnel's elegantly argued solution seems debatable. As he observed himself, the Porta Triumphantis does not form part of the city wall. Perhaps the transition through the gate was meant to keep the triumphator within the city area of Rome, but it is difficult to see how the custom could have helped to keep him within the city wall. The jump by Leucippus/Ephippus and Toxeus over a moat also hardly proves that the Greeks considered their city wall to form a magic circle, and Miltiades' illness is explained by Herodotus (6. 134) as the fatal consequence of his haste in leaping down from (not over) the wall of the sanctuary — a perfectly natural cause — and nowhere related to his violation of the magic of the wall. The breach in the wall for the Olympic victor is perhaps best explained as the dramatization of his entry through a certain delay and resistance (cf. Chapter 8).

There is in fact a striking difference between Greece and Rome regarding the walls. In Rome, except for the gates, the city walls were considered to be inviolate and sacred, as Plutarch (Mor. 270/1), quoting Varro, states — an idea perhaps derived from the Etruscans who also considered their walls to be sacred (Festus 358. 21). Crossing the walls, in fact, was punishable by death, a penalty which was explicitly connected with Remus' death (Pomp. Dig. 1. 8. 11). The myth of Remus' death, then, seems to have functioned as a deterrent against crossing the sacred walls, even though we do not know the age of this tradition.50

Remus' death naturally raises a preliminary question. Why was Rome founded by twins in the first place? Basically, two answers have found acceptance in modern times. First, the great expert on Indo-European traditions, the late Georges Dumézil, understandably interpreted Romulus and Remus as the Roman variant of the Indo-European concept of twins as exemplified by the Dioskouroi and, especially, the Vedic Nasatya-Asvin. These latter twins 'rajouissent les veillards, guéissent les hommes et les animaux malades et réparent les mutilés, accouplent, enrichissent, sauvent des dangers et des persecutions, donnent des vaches et des chevaux merveilleux, font jaillir le lait et l'hydromel etc.' Pace Dumézil, the Roman twins do not perform anything even remotely comparable.51

Second, a connection has been proposed between the twins and various dual organisations of ancient Rome, be it the dual consulate or the much older duality of the once separate Roman communities on the Palatine and the Quirinal with their corresponding two bands of Salii and Luperci, with whom Romulus and Remus were closely connected in later times. Both


explanations misjudge the special position of twins. All over the world twins occupy a special position which is nowhere related to dual tribal organisations but to their uniqueness. Most likely, the Romans have used this atypical position to accentuate the special status of their founders. Similarly, Rome’s neighbour Tibur was founded by Coras and Catillus, *gemini fratres* (but see also Ch. 1 and Ch. 4, 4), and Thebes’ walls were built by the twins Amphion and Zethos.52

Why did Remus have to go? Recently, his death has been variously explained by the political development of ancient Rome, by Indo-European traditions and by a kind of structuralist approach. Cornell has suggested that the Roman state, after the fusion of the Palatine and the Quirinal, required a single founder and thus eliminated one of the brothers. This explanation is implicitly based on the idea that the twins originated in the dual organisation of early Rome — an idea which we have already rejected (above). Two Indo-Europeanists have proposed a much more adventurous solution. They see in the Roman foundation myth a reflection of a primeval Indo-European creation myth. Unfortunately, they can only fit Remus into their scheme by etymological juggling: Remus is really derived from proto-Indo-European *Yemo*, or 'twin', under the influence of Ruma, Roma and Romulus. To say nothing of other improbabilities in their reconstruction, such as the existence of a primeval twin with the names Twin and Man, one can only agree with a recent critic that the reconstructed meaning of Remus' name is, 'as a matter of fact, a completely superfluous confirmation of the fact that, as Livy states, Romulus and Remus were twins'. Finally, it has been suggested that the killing of Remus is to a certain extent equivalent to the slaying of the Spartoi by Kadmos before the foundation of Thebes and the killing of the dragon by Apollo before the foundation of the oracle of Delphi: the definitive order is based on the conquest of the chaos. The problem here is that Remus can hardly be interpreted as representing the chaos: he is a decent, if less successful individual (he is captured by Amulius’ men) than Romulus until his fatal jump."

Even more recently, Burkert has compared Remus’ murder with the Jewish myth of Cain and Abel. After Cain had slain his brother, he fled and founded the very first city in mankind’s history. In both cases, the new beginning of society is based on *la violence fondatrice*. Burkert’s interpretation is explicitly based on the theories of Rene Girard, according to whom social stability is preserved only by temporary violence and its ritual resolution — an aggression which is regulated through the ritual sacrifice of animals in antiquity. However, the parallel with Israel is perhaps not as strong as it looks at first sight. For the early nomadic Israelites, the city was the place of *hybris* (Babylon) and vices (*Sodom* and *Gomorrah*). Consequently, the foundation of the first city may just be the continuation of Cain’s lawless behaviour, instead of the foundation of civilisation as in Romulus’ case. In any case, one cannot help wondering whether the stress on the beneficial side of violence is not too obviously the product of our own violent times to be acceptable as an explanation.54


Unfortunately, unlike Greek mythology, the poverty of the Roman mythological tradition rarely allows us to compare various myths. It is true that in Conon (c. 48) Amulius kills his brother Numitor, but this is evidently a late variant. We simply do not have other Italic examples of other fratricides which might elucidate Remus' case. Perhaps, it is relevant that Rome had raised only one of the Castores to the ranks of the national gods but even so — Pollux was not killed. The murder of Remus remains very much an enigma."

5. The asylum

Having killed Remus, Romulus tried to expand his newly-founded city by allowing runaway slaves, criminals and murderers to settle there. This procedure embarrassed Livy, attracted the scorn of early Christian writers, and has never stopped puzzling scholars. The Romans themselves explained Romulus' hospitality by positing the existence of an asylum on the Capitoline hill, but already our oldest source, the late second century Calpurnius Piso (fr. 4 P), had no certain information about the place, nor do later authors have anything more specific to say. Since the Romans had taken over both the word asylum and the corresponding institution from the Greeks, the inference is virtually inescapable that the posited Capitoline asylum is a later rationalisation of the unexplainable contribution by criminals to Rome's foundation.56

As Alfoldi saw, there is, however, a clear Italic parallel to the Roman mixture of youths and criminals. The sons of the Lucani used to be separated from their families at an early age and sent to the Brettians who raised them in the bush and trained them to live from plundering raids. These boys received into their company runaway slaves, and we only hear about them because they had become a nuisance after having founded a separate community.57

We find similar groups among the early Iranians. The Avesta often mentions the maîrya, or 'young men', as the term for the members of anti-Zoroastrian bands. Although these bands are depicted in the darkest colours and accordingly call for a careful evaluation of the information supplied by the Avesta and other Zoroastrian writings, it is consistent with the Italic material that these maîrya are said to be accompanied by robbers. Scholars have for a long time connected the Indian equivalent marya with the term maryanni, the warrior aristocracy of the Mitanni. The occurrence of these Indo-European warriors in the Near East at the beginning of the second millennium is a splendid example of a group of youths who established themselves abroad after one of their raids."

Less remote in history than these bands of maîrya are the bands of Persian youths described by Strabo who most likely derived his information from Hecataeus' Periodos. The boys are called cardaces because they have to live by theft for, according to Strabo, Persian 'carda means the manly and warlike spirit'. This passage of Strabo was deleted by Meineke but

56 Fab. Pictor FGrH 809 F4; Calp. Piso F 4 P; Cato F 20 P; cf. Schröder, Cato, 178-181; Liv. 1. 8. 5; Juuv. 8. 272-5 etc.; Pouget, Origines, 193f.
57 Diod. Sic. 16. 15. If; Justin, 23. 1. 7-12; A. Napoli, 'I rapporti tra Bruzi e Lucani', SMSR 37 (1966), 61-83; Alfoldi, Vie Struktur, 129-131.
58 Maîrya: n. 43. Maryanni: M. Mayrhofer, Vie Arier im Vorderen Orient — ein Mythos?, SB (Wien, 1974). Mayrhofer's survey of recent scholarly opinions in Investigationes philologicae et comparativae: Gedenkschrift für H. Kronasser (Wiesbaden, 1982), 72-90, shows that the objections by A. Kammenhuber, Vie Arier im Vorderen Orient (Heidelberg, 1968). 220ff, against the Indo-European interpretation of the maryanni have not been accepted by other scholars.
inspection of the palimpsest has shown beyond doubt that his suspicion was unfounded." Around 400 BC the cardaces were already mercenaries, and later in the fourth century cardaces appeared in the army of Autophrades. At the battle of Issus the cardaces seemed to have constituted the flower of the Persian army (Bosworth on Arr. 2. 8. 6), and in the early second century BC we still hear of a village of cardaces (Walbank on Pol. 5. 79. 11). The term recurs in a Pahlavi text, Draxt-i-Asurig 18, where it has the meaning 'wanderer', a meaning that fits mercenaries and bands of youths who most likely had to wander around in order to live of their robberies. In ancient Iran we also find the word marika. This term, related to mairya, means 'vassal' in Darius' inscription of Naqsh-i-Rustam. As Widengren has demonstrated in a detailed discussion. This strongly suggests, as he rightly observed, that the feudal structure of the Achaemenid empire had evolved from a group of young men which had served as a retinue and which, it may be added, had apparently broken away from the former tribal structure. It is also in retinues that we find other examples of the mixture of youth and criminals."

The warriors of the Greek army before Troy are regularly called kouroi or kouretes, the technical term for the age-set of the young. These warriors were often not in their extreme youth but already some years into their adolescence; the situation may be compared with the one sketched by Tacitus, in which the Germanic adolescents had already received their weapons before they joined one of the chiefs."" Besides these kouroi, the Greek leaders had a kind of inner circle, the hetairoi, a situation again paralleled in Germany where a degree in relationship also existed: the "company" itself even contains ranks (gradus quin etiam ipse comitus habit) (Germ. 13). The word hetairios often means 'member of an age-set', as appears from a number of Homeric passages. The more general meaning 'friend, companion' seems to be a later development, since this meaning does not tally so well with the typical element sws which indicates, as Benveniste expressed it, the membership of a group of siens propres. Among these hetairoi a number of outlaws can be found. Hector killed Lycophron, who had become a hetairois of Ajax after having committed a murder at Cytheron (II. XV. 430-39); another of Hector's victims was Epigeus, who was a comrade of Achilles after having murdered his nephew (II. XVI. 370-76). Telemachos, whose contemporaries constituted his hetairois, happily received Theoclymenus, a killer fugitive amongst his comrades (Od. 15. 224). Although these hetairoi often function as a kind of permanent retinue, they were also employed for a single expedition as in the case of Diomedes' nocturnal raid (II. X. 234ff; Od. 14. 247).62

Among the ancient Germans, retinues also played a prominent role. Tacitus (Germ. 13f) relates that a boy received his weapons in the assembly from one of the nobles, his father or one of his kin. Subsequently, he joined a princeps for whom 'it was always a distinction to be surrounded, in peace, by a band of chosen young men' (semper electorum iunvenum globo circumdari in pace decus). The noble youths apparently then moved around to those places where war was frequently carried on, and Tacitus stresses that the chief had to bestow lavish

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gifts on his youths to keep them satisfied, gifts acquired ‘through warfare and plunder’.” The initiatory significance of this stay abroad is well illustrated by Paulus Diaconus’ story about the Longobard king Audoin refusing his son Alboin Tischgenossenschaft until he had received his weapons from a foreign king. To that end Alboin left the country with a group of forty youths to serve another king, again a typical age-group as retinue. Tacitus does not inform us about criminals or exiles as being part of Germanic retinues, but the distinguished Germanist Reinhard Wenskus has presented extensive evidence that many Germanic nobles received outlaws and fugitives into their comitatus or used groups of robbers and criminals as their warriors; most perceptively, he even compared the foundation of Rome with Germanic conditions!

Retinues of youths could also be found among the ancient Celts. During the second Punic War, Hannibal had to act as an arbiter for the Allobroges, whose king had been expelled by ‘his brother and his retinue of young men’ (fratre et coetu iuniorum: Liv. 21. 31. 6f). In this particular case we may still remain sceptical but our next instance hardly admits of any doubts. During the siege of Gergovia, a certain Convictolitavis tried to persuade ‘some young men amongst whom was the prince Litaviccus and his brothers, young men of the most distinguished family’ (quibusdam adulescentibus . . . quorum erat princeps Litaviccus atque eius frates, amplissima familia nati adulescentes; Caesar BG. 7. 37. 1). When the plot was thwarted, Litaviccus had to flee ‘with his clients’ (clientibus; 7. 40. 7). Although social relations in Gaul are difficult to reconstruct because of the variety of terms used by our sources — amicati, amici, clientes, comites, familiares — the inference presents itself that these clientes were the same as the adulescentes mentioned before. There exists no further information about the composition of this particular retinue, but the presence of outlaws in the retinue of prominent Gauls appears from the following examples: Indutiomarus ‘began to attract to himself exiles and the condemned’ (exsules damnatosque: BG 5. 55. 3) and Vercingetorix ‘held a levy in the countryside of the needy and the ruined’ (dilectum egentium ac perditorum: BG 7. 4. 3).

The role of the young is still conspicuous in early medieval Ireland which preserved certain archaic features that already had disappeared from the Gaulish society of Caesar’s time. Modern folktales continue to relate the adventures of Finn and his fian, warriors who roamed through the wilderness. The band seems to have gone out of existence by the thirteenth century, but its narrative tradition belongs to the most archaic part of Irish literature. The fian was usually a group of pre-adult males who remained outside society until their wedding; during this period they lived by hunting and plundering and at the same time acted as a shield for society. Although the fian normally lived beyond society’s borders, it could sometimes function as the retinue of the king at ancient Tara, the modern county Meath: ‘Finn mac Cumaill was the leader of [the king] Cormac’s retinue as well as the head of the exiles (!), hired attendants. and all the soldiers besides, so that common folk refer to them as the fiana of Finn.’ Here then we see once again the youth together with outcasts functioning as a retinue.


And it is in an outpost of Celtic civilisation that we find our latest example of a retinue consisting of youths. In 1188, Baldwin, archbishop of Canterbury, undertook a mission to South and North Wales with Gerald, archdeacon of Rcreon, as his companion. The latter has left a fascinating description of this journey, and tells us that when they crossed over to Mona (modern Anglesey), the archbishop addressed the inhabitants and tried to persuade them to accept the Cross. Among those who refused were a band of youths (juvenes electi) who formed part of the household (familia) of Rhodri, the Lord of the island."

It is time to draw some conclusions. First, from our survey it appears that among the Indo-European peoples, just as among 'primitive' ones, the pre-adult males often constituted a separate band which occupied a place at the margin of, or completely outside, society; this marginal position consequently attracted other marginals such as run-away slaves, outlaws and exiles. This even proved to be the case when the youths functioned as retainers of a noble or a king, a fact which throws an interesting light on the particular position in society of the body of retainers. As the Germanist Wenskus (above) already saw, the picture of Romulus and Remus' band of youths and outlaws can in all probability be recognised as such a marginal group of initiates.

Are there any parallels for such bands in archaic Italy? In October 1977 the Dutch Institute in Rome brought to light a dedication in Satricum by the followers of a Publius Valerius, dating from about 500 BC, which says:

\[ \text{i steterai Popliosio Valesiosio} \]
\[ \text{suodales Marmartei} \]
\[ \text{I have erected — of Poplio Valesios —} \]
\[ \text{the companions — to Mamars} \]

The exciting possibility exists that the Poplios Valesios mentioned in this Satrican inscription can (not 'must') be identified with the Publius Valerius Poplicola who is well known from the literary tradition as one of the founders of the Roman Republic. If the identification is correct, the implication would be that either a Roman band leader operated in Satricum or the leader of a Satrican band in Rome. In a balanced and well-informed discussion of the historical implications of the Lapis Satricanus, Versnel has convincingly interpreted the term suodales as meaning a 'group of comrades', a kind of Gefolgschaft. Livy mentions various groups of such sodales. Besides those of the Fabii (2. 49. 5), we have the sodales of the young Tarquini (2. 3. 2), those of the patrician K. Quinctius (3. 14. 3) who belong to a story that was a later fabrication (Ogilvie ad loc.), and those of Demetrius and Perseus (40. 7. 1). Except for the Fabian passage which gives no details, all these sodales are young men. This fits in very well with an observation by Dumézil that the Indian element sva, or 'one's own', which is related to sodalis, is in the RgVeda characteristic of the god Indra and his followers. The Marut, an autonomous group of young men (above, n. 43): another word related to sodalis is hetairos, again often denoting men of the same (young) age (above, n. 62). It seems therefore not improbable to see in the band of Publius Valerius a company of young warriors, even though they will not have been a consistent age set but mixed with mercenaries or other adventurers."


Recently, Momigliano has also drawn attention to the phenomenon of condottieri taking control with their war bands of various cities in Etruria and Latium. The scenes of the François tomb of Vulci (about 300 BC) show Caeles Vibenna being liberated by Mastarna, and his brother Aulus Vibenna killing a man from (probably) Falerii; a Gnava Tarquinius Romanus is being killed by a certain Marcus Camillus, also a Roman name (unless the Etruscan Camitilnas has to be transcribed as Camitililus). These scenes, then, show a number of warriors who apparently travelled around to practise their trade. The brothers Vibenna re-appear in Rome as the helpers of Mastarna who was identified by the emperor Claudius with the Roman king Servius Tullius, but this identification is far from compelling — Mastarna may well have been a king in his own right. And as late as c. 460 BC, the Sabine condottiere Appius Herdonius managed to occupy the Capitol.68

According to Momigliano, it is ‘naturale pensare che queste bande fossero di giovani’, even though they will not have been consisting from ‘classi di età nel senso preciso della parola’. Moreover, he observed that Romulus and Remus ‘evidentemente appartengono a questa tradizione’ — a suggestion which fits in well with the conclusion we arrived at on the basis of our survey of the Indo-European evidence.69

There is one more conclusion to be drawn from our survey of the Indo-European evidence. The bands of youths often developed into separate communities or established themselves as a ruling elite over other places, as happened with the Brettii, the Achaemenid nobles and the near Eastern maryanni. Regarding the Greeks, it has recently been pointed out that the name of the Hyantes, a tribe attested for Aetolia, Boeotia and Phocis, ‘entspricht genau idg. *iuuent — ‘jung’, ist also die bezeichnung der Jungmannschaft eines Stammes, die etwa auf Landnahme Auszug’; recent studies on the continuing process whereby separate Germanic and Celtic tribes were founded also suggest that the breaking away of the ‘Jungmannschaft’ was a major factor in the formation of new tribes.70

The same model of foundation is evidently used in the myth of Rome’s foundation by Romulus and Remus’ band. However, it would be an inadmissible confusion of myth and history to interpret the myth as a real memory of an actual historical foundation event. The site of Rome was already inhabited in the second half of the second millennium BC and the archeological evidence shows that in the case of Rome we have to speak of a gradual Stadtwerdung rather than Stadtgründung. We may compare the case of Athens where myth speaks of a synoikismos by Theseus, whereas archeology suggests a gradual fusion of various villages. Myth ‘clarifies’ this process by representing it as a one-time historical event. And it is hardly chance that the mythopoetic imagination opted for the model of the initiatory group as founders: the future of the city is dependent on the generation of the young.71


69 Momigliano, Settimo contributo, 183 (first published in Sociologia del Diritto 9, 1982/3, 27-33). It is a pleasure to note that I reached very similar conclusions in my own 1982 study of the Satirican inscription (above, n. 44).


Finally, having seen that the band of Romulus and Remus displays the typical characteristics of a group of adolescents on the threshold of adulthood, we can also better understand the connection of Romulus and Remus with Mars and with wolves. Mars was the god of March, the month that opened the year in the old calendar. He was also the god of the purification of the army, the *lustratio exercitus*, when a new unity was formed under a new commander. For the Italic peoples, Mars was the god connected with the *ver sāctum*, the ritual in which the youth of one year was sent away to found a new community. In both qualities, god of the new beginning and protector and guide of youth, Mars is the appropriate god of the twins and their initiatory band.\(^{72}\)

The close connection of Mars with wolves also points to his protection of youth. Among the Indo-Europeans, strangers and adolescents who were living away from civilised society were often called wolf. Moreover, among these peoples many tribal and personal names are composed with the element ‘wolf’ (*Lycii, Lycurgus* etc.), and it is hard to attribute this only to the bearers' having been criminals — it rather points to a time when youths were still living away from society during their initiation or were performing heroic feats to prove their manhood; the custom is found among the Indo-Iranians, Hittites, Greeks, Irish, Germans, and Slavs. When a she-wolf appears as nurse, as in the case of Romulus and Rernus, the mythical lupine function accords well with the future life of wolves that the youths would have to live.\(^{73}\)

### 6. The Rape of the Sabines

How can a community continue to exist without women? After all attempts to obtain women from neighbouring societies had failed. Romulus cunningly organised the rape of the Sabine women. The kidnapping is already described by Fabius Pictor, Ennius and perhaps Cato. It thus belongs to the firmly established older parts of the foundation myth and will have been an integral part of the foundation myth from the very beginning, since Rome could hardly have grown without families and children. On the other hand, the women need not always have been Sabine — they could equally have been Latin, Aquitanian or Volscian. In fact, it is hard to imagine them as Sabine even before the sixth and early fifth century when the Sabines not only immigrated to Rome but even attempted to occupy the city, as in the story of Appius *Heronius* (above, n. 68). It may well be that the arrival of Appius Claudius with his throng of clients was a powerful incitement to include Sabines into the Roman foundation myth.\(^ {74}\)

The Romans themselves connected the Sabine Rape with the capture scene of their wedding ceremony (cf. Chapter 8), but this looks like a late *rapprochement*, and the two most recent


interpretations of the rape have recourse to the Indo-European background of the Romans, although along different routes. On the feeble basis of the Sabine rape, various Greek foundation myths, and a Scythian tale known only from a Greek source, Briquel daringly reconstructed an Indo-European récit in which marginals such as slaves and fugitives unite with the free women of their community — a relationship which is not tolerated by the free men and results in armed conflict. The comparison is obviously wrong, since the Greek myths play with the idea of a 'world turned upside down' in which the marginals of the polis, women and slaves, are opposed to the free males, whereas the Romans kidnap women from an altogether different community."

Dumézil, followed by Poucet, approached the problem from a different angle. Having observed that the ancient Indians officially recognized a marriage by rape, raksasa, he postulated the existence of similar marriages among the other Indo-European peoples. The way 'he proves' his point is vintage Dumézil. For Greece, the only example he can muster is Heracles' capture of Iole. However, since the hero took her only after her father refused to give up his daughter as he had promised, it is hard to see how this case constitutes proof of a customary wedding by rape. The ancient Germanic example attests a similar sleight of hand. The relatively late (twelfth century) Scandinavian poem Gripisspa tells how Sigurdr disarms the Valkyrie Sigdrifa who then voluntarily gives herself to him. Again Dumézil concludes that we find here a case of raksasa. Still, despite these unconvincing parallels, Dumézil might be right that the early Indo-Europeans did acknowledge marriages by rape, since they are also mentioned by the archaic Celtic laws of Ireland and Gaul. However, there is no trace in the entire Roman tradition of such a custom. as Dumézil himself concedes, even though it may be possible that marriages by rape went out of existence in the Republic when life was more regulated than it seems to have been during the monarchic period.""

The rape was said to have happened at the Consualia, a scantily documented festival which took place on August 21. Warde Fowler suggested long ago that 'in the legendary connexion of the Rape of the Sabine women with the Consualia we may see a reflection of the jollity and license which accompanies the completion of harvest among so many peoples'. His explanation would agree well with the character of the festival. It was a day of first-fruit offerings, and mules and horses had a day of rest and were wreathed with flowers. The farmers will have rested with their animals, and Varro tells us that shepherds did gymnastics during the festival: it was evidently enjoyed by the whole population: Strabo (5. 3. 2) mentions that it was still celebrated in his own days. All over the world, harvest and first-fruit festivals are for the whole community: orgies of sex and food are normal, and the festival often functions as a kind of New Year. The combination is not really surprising. The availability of new food guarantees the existence of society for another year and the abundance of food makes a temporary relaxation possible after a period of scarcity. In various Greek festivals, the relaxation is stressed by the unfettering of statues of gods that normally remained tied up. The late Karl Meuli rightly observed that this unfettering went along with a temporary dissolution of the social order, such as took place in Rome during the Nonae Capitanae and the Saturnalia


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(Chapter 6). In this connection, it may be relevant that the subterranean altar of Consus was uncovered only during his festivals.77

However persuasive Warde Fowler's suggestion may look at first sight, the Romans themselves did not associate the rape of the Sabines with the jolly atmosphere of the Consualia. They etymologically connected Consus, who originally was the god of the corn that had been safely stored away, with consilium 'plan'. In other words, they explained the connection of rape and Consualia by ascribing the plan of the rape to the god Consus. Such an etymological play looks typically Varronian and a Varronian origin for the connection between rape and Consualia is the more likely, since an exact date for the rape is not attested before him. Earlier accounts may have left the festival unspecified.78

7. The Death of Romulus

Many Greek foundation myths do not mention the way the founder of the city died. Livy, however relates the accepted tradition about Romulus' death. 'One day while he was reviewing his troops on the Campus Martius near the marsh of Capra, a storm burst, with violent thunder. A cloud enveloped him, so thick that it hid him from the eyes of everyone present: and from that moment he was never seen again upon earth' (1. 15). Livy also mentions an alternative version which is told in greater detail by Dionysius (2. 56. 4f). 'For these reasons (ie Romulus behaving like a tyrant), they say, the patricians formed a conspiracy against him and resolved to slay him; and having carried out the deed in the senate-house, they divided his body into several pieces, that it might not be seen, and then came out, each one hiding his part of the body under his robes, and afterwards burying it in secret.' Having rejected this version, Livy mentions that the seal was set on the other version by a certain Julius Proculus, according to some sources a farmer from Alba Longa, who declared: 'Romulus, the father of our City, descended from heaven at dawn this morning and appeared to me. In awe and reverence I stood before him, praying for permission to look upon his face without sin. "Go". he said, "and tell the Romans that by heaven's will my Rome shall be capital of the world. Let them learn to be soldiers, let them know, and teach their children, that no power on earth can stand against Roman arms."

Hearing these words, he was taken up again into the sky' (tr. de Sélincourt). Various sources, but not Livy, identified this deified Romulus with the god Quirinus.79

There can be no doubt that the oldest testimonies presuppose the version which Livy accepts. Ennius already related that Romulus, probably carried up by Mars, lived in heaven with the gods who had given birth to him (cum dis genitalibus). In addition, having observed that the words of Julius Proculus in Livy have a certain poetic colouring and that Cicero's mention of Proculus (Rep. 2. 20) leaves no doubt about the antiquity of the story, Skutsch has plausibly concluded that Proculus, too, occurred in Ennius. This conclusion is the more persuasive since it has long been noted that Ovid most probably derives the archaic form Longa Alba (other than the usual Alba Longa) from Ennius in his version of the Proculus story. The deification of the


78 Consus and corn: Köves-Zulaul, Reden und Schweigen. 82. Consus and consilium: Bömer on Ovid F. 3. 199. Ogilvie (on Liv. 1. 9) wrongly suggests that the connection of Consus and rape already occurs in Ennius. if not much earlier (on 2. 18. 2).

79 Romulus' death: Liv. 1. 16; Ovrl F. 2. 491ff; DH 1. 56. 2: Plut. Rom. 27. 6ff. As the identification with Quirinus is demonstrably late, its problems need not concern us here. On Quirinus see must recently A. Magdelain, ‘Quirinus et le droit’, MEFRA 96 (1984), 195-237; Versnel (above. n. 15), n. 120 (with earlier bibliography).
founder of the city is a typical Greek concept which will hardly have been introduced before the third century: the identification of Aeneas, after his disappearance, with Pater Indiges is a close parallel, although it cannot be dated with any precision (cf. Chapter 2). Moreover, the story of Romulus' apotheosis cannot be separated from that of Proculus, and the epiphany too was a typical Greek concept. Everything, then, points to a relatively late date for Romulus' apotheosis, the more so since there are no early testimonies for his cult. Classen has even suggested that Ennius was the inventor of Romulus' apotheosis, but the scarcity of the data does not allow of any certainty at this point."

Skutsch has also suggested that Proculus, whose name according to him fits in well with those of Romulus and Faustulus, owed his name Julius to Julian ambition. Apparently, if Skutsch is right, Ennius (?) chose an archaic-sounding name (cf. § 8) to enhance the credibility of his report. Skutsch, like Classen, further suggests that Proclus acquired his cognomen Julius through the efforts of Caesar. Cicero, though, would have hardly presented such a recent invention as an accepted opinion. Nothing therefore prevents us from believing that the Julians, who in the late second century started to assert themselves by claiming descent from Venus (Chapter 2), also thought it wise to have a finger in the Romulus pie.81

The alternative version of Romulus' death is not attested before 67 BC when during the discussions of the Lex Gabinia the consul Piso called out to Pompey that he would experience a similar fate to Romulus if he tried to imitate him. Despite the relatively late date, scholars have claimed a remote antiquity for this particular version. For example, Brelich postulated un'originaria e fondamentale identità between Quirinus and Romulus and proceeded to compare the fate of Romulus-Quirinus with that of various dying gods such as Adonis and Tammuz and with that of the so-called Darna-ancestors from whose torn up bodies important plants grow. The complete absence of any agrarian reference in the Romulus myth would in itself already be sufficient to reject Brelich's interpretation. It is however fatal for his analysis that the identità between Romulus and Quirinus is demonstrably young. Ennius invokes Quirinus before Romulus' death, Lucilius separates Quirinus and Romulus, and Cicero is still uncertain about the identification. It will not help, as Coarelli has recently done, to denounce a sound philological analysis as critica positivistica. Brelich's discussion simply does not face up to the facts and is therefore built on sand.82

Taking his point of departure from Mircea Eliade's thesis that the foundation of a city repeats the cosmogony, Walter Burkert has suggested a different solution: 'indem der Urkonig in seine Glieder zerlegt wird, entsteht der Staat in seiner ordnung, seiner Gliederung und seinem notwendigen Zusammenhang. Die Senatoren, die patres, sind zunachts einfach die Haupter der einzelnen Grossfamilien; wenn mann erzahlt, wie jeder von ihnen ein Stiick des Urkonigs in Besitz nahm, so bedeutet dies, dass sie alle zusammen Rom verkorpern, dass Gesamtrom sich in die gentes aufgliedert und in ihrem Zusammenwirken existiert.' It must be objected that this explanation is built completely on hypotheses. Nowhere in our tradition is the death of Romulus connected with the establishment of the rule of the senate. Not only does this suggestion posit a situation before the rise to power of the senate but it also forces us to accept


that the senate would have been unable to suppress this incriminating version in the course of time. This is too much to believe. In support of his hypothesis, Burkert also compared the festival of the Feriae Latinae at which the Latins all received a part of the sacrificial victim's meat. The eponymous ancestor of the Latins, king Latinus, disappeared during a battle against Mezentius and subsequently became Iuppiter Latiaris, the god of the festival, but this legend is only attested very late and it will hardly antedate the early first century BC. However suggestive Burkert's explanation is, it has to be rejected for its all too hypothetical character.  

On the other hand, Burkert's attempt to explain the myth from ritual looks basically sound. The gruesome detail of the tearing up of Romulus may well have originated in a kind of Zerreissungsopfer. Unfortunately, the Poplifugia, the scene of Romulus' murder, is a totally obscure festival about which we know next to nothing, although the death of Romulus well fits a festival in which the Romans were put to flight (cf. Chapter 6, 3). Plutarch mentions that when the males leave the city for the sacrifice at the Goat's Marsh they call each other by all kinds of first names in imitation of the panic caused by Romulus' disappearance. Burkert wants to explain these names as a kind of Unschuldskomödie after the sacrifice: if everyone is guilty, no one will be penalised. But it seems more convincing to see in the custom a kind of quiritatio, the Roman custom of crying out for help in times of crisis, since such crying out would well fit the moment of panic. This is really all there is to say about the Poplifugia with some certainty. The first mention of Romulus' murder (above) suggests a date at the beginning of the first century, but the reason for this alternative version is still totally unexplained. Like the murder of Remus, the gruesome death of Romulus remains very much an enigma.

8. The birth of the Roman foundation myth

The canonical version of the Roman foundation myth appears developed in the second half of the third century when Fabius Pictor, like his near-contemporary Naevius, connects Romulus with Aeneas. It is probably also in the third century that the recognition scene was introduced, perhaps under the influence of Sophocles' Tyro. Earlier generations of scholars even derived the whole of the foundation myth from Sophocles' play, but the statue of the twins set up by the Ogulnius brothers in 296 BC shows that the myth already existed in the fourth century when it is most unlikely that Sophocles could have exerted any influence in Rome.

Can we go back even further? The upper time limit is constituted by the Stadtwerdung in the middle of the seventh century (above, n. 71), but the myth must be younger. The Etruscan element in the names of Amulus, Numitor and Remus suggests a date after the end of the seventh century when the Etruscan influence becomes visible in Rome. The juvenile band of the twins on the whole fits the monarchic period better than the Republic when the pubes had a


more integrated function in the Roman army. Within this period, the absence of a *nomen gentile* among all the actors in the myth points to a somewhat earlier date, since the dual onomastic system, in which a person is designated by a first name (*praenomen*) and the name of his clan, gained strength concurrently with the urbanization of Central Italy. Taking all these factors into account, we propose the first half of the sixth century as the most likely moment for the origin of the myth.**

Nothing is of course known about the reason(s) which induced the Romans to develop their foundation myth but we may perhaps close this chapter with a guess. In the next chapter we will see that Praeneste, the wealthiest city of archaic Latium, had a foundation myth which was in many ways similar to the one of Rome.** Is it then perhaps conceivable to consider the Roman foundation myth as a kind of *bricolage* developed by the city in order to assert its status against its powerful neighbour?**

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**Praeneste:** Pouzet, *Origines*, 24-27.

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