

In this paper I intend to present the result of a reading of the *Life of Romulus*, which, through a selection of significant passages and examples, aims to grasp Plutarch's intentions in his biographical treatment of a character belonging in legend or at any rate preceding historical times. Scholars generally agree on the fact that a governing motif of the *Parallel Lives* is to be seen in the idea of the interaction and reciprocal complementarity of Greek and Roman civilization (see e.g. Desideri 1992, 4475 ff.; Barigazzi 1992, 27 ff.; Pelling 1979, 74 ff.); in this particular case the biographer emphasizes not merely the historical process that produced the affinities between the two civilizations through a constantly increasing mutual contact, but the similarities already apparent ever since the earliest times, when the common elements are unexpectedly revealed as intrinsically constitutional, in spite of and beyond all differences (cf. Larmour 1988, 361 ff., Ampolo 1988, p. xxxii ff.). Plutarch makes no attempt to conceal the traits native and peculiar to primeval Roman history, nor does he try to establish contrived affinities between Romulus' founding activity and the numerous figures of founders of Hellenic tradition. However, while tackling the problems posed by the connection of names with ceremonies, aitiologies, and other events broadly related to religion, he misses no opportunity to treat the two languages – Latin and Greek – as two constitutionally identical vehicles of communication (cf. Strobach 1997, 32 ff.). Nor does he miss any opportunity to select and emphasize those elements of Romulus' biography which are better suited to establish meaningful parallels with other comparable semi-legendary figures of the Greek tradition, though he basically abides by the material transmitted by his sources. Therefore Romulus' *Bios* must be seen not merely as a self-standing and self-contained work, but also as the opportunity to prove that a basic *koinonia* between the two peoples existed even before it became apparent in the course of history, being contained in their very *physis*, and therefore bound to develop constantly and to come to fruition under the providential guidance of the gods (cf. Barigazzi 1984, 280 ff.). Or, at the very least, the reading of Plutarch cannot but point out a number of common or literarily recognizable traits and some similar or comparable stages pointing towards the higher bilingual civilization of the imperial age.

During the presentation attention will be called to some relevant texts:

- 1) ch. 19 - the report of the fight between the Romans and the Sabines, which follows the pattern of a *stasis*, i. e. a civil war, whose narration has recourse to typically Greek modes of expression: e. g. the Sabine women's appeal to reconciliation presents the content as well the stylistical structure found in *rheseis* from tragedy.
- 2) ch. 24 - the "Oedipean" motif of the *miasma*, i. e. the pollution of the city brought about by the shedding of blood, and its "rebirth" after the purification prescribed by religious ritual.
- 3) ch. 26 - the political motif (already found in Herodotus) of the inevitable degeneration of power when held by one man.