

*EXEMPLUM FIDEI: MARCUS ATILIUS REGULUS AS A MORAL
EXEMPLUM*

BY

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the story of Marcus Atilius Regulus as an *exemplum fidei*. Taking Matthew Roller's division of exemplary discourse into the following categories as a model (2004), it discusses Regulus according to action, audience, commemoration, and imitation. In accordance with fetial law, his action of returning to Carthage to keep an oath ensures that the gods will consider the Romans just. Three audiences—the Roman senate, the gods, and the Carthaginians—interpret his action; the Roman senate and the gods approve, but the Carthaginians do not. Flexibility inherent in the Regulus story allows authors to mold the story with different thematic emphases so that the story maintains its relevance for new audiences. Romans imitate Regulus in a variety of ways that do not always include keeping an oath. Through these imitations the exemplary cycle renews itself and provides a sense of continuity to the next generation of Romans. There is some overlap among these categories, because the categorical elements of exemplary discourse are by nature interconnected. Nevertheless, focusing on these elements of the Regulus story demonstrates the significance of his story for a Roman audience through the ages.

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Introduction¹

In 255 BCE Marcus Atilius Regulus led the Roman army against the Carthaginians. After great Roman successes both on land and at sea the Carthaginians were ready to negotiate their own surrender, but Regulus' terms were too harsh. The Carthaginians brought in a new general from Sparta, Xanthippus, who reorganized the Carthaginians and defeated Regulus' army, taking Regulus and a few others hostage. This is where the story of Regulus ended in the historical account of Polybius,² but the Romans continued with another story. When the war had continued for another year and the Carthaginians were losing once more, they sent Regulus to negotiate an exchange of prisoners with Rome. Having sworn to return to Carthage if he failed, nevertheless he convinced the senate that the exchange would be disadvantageous. Keeping his oath, he returned to Carthage and to death by torture.

Most ancient authors writing about Regulus' military career agree upon these elements as the basics of the story. Exemplary discourse was the Roman way of transmitting cultural values by telling the tales of Romans as examples of virtues and vices that should be imitated or avoided. Regulus is unique in Roman exemplary discourse because many stories were told about him for diverse reasons. He was used variously as an *exemplum fidei, patientiae, fortitudinis, or fortunae* (faith, endurance, strength, and fate). Some of these exemplary tales varied in interesting ways. This paper will concentrate on Regulus as an *exemplum fidei*.

¹ I am indebted to Professors A. Corbeill, E. Scioli, and T. Welch for their careful reading and comments on this paper.

² Polyb. 1.25-35.

Genre played a key role in the use of Regulus as an exemplum. Historians tended to use Regulus as an *exemplum fortunae*. This trend began with Polybius, the first extant source for Regulus, who wrote around the middle of the second century BCE. Polybius emphasized that Regulus had been doing well against the Carthaginians, but had demanded harsh terms when they sought a treaty and so his defeat was a retribution sent by fortune.³ This interpretation was picked up by Diodorus Siculus, Florus, and possibly Livy, although the story as told by Livy comes down through the *Periochae* and it is hard to tell where emphasis has been added.⁴ The historians who wrote in Latin also told a story that Regulus killed a one hundred and twenty foot snake, a deed which, combined with his early military success, made him an *exemplum fortitudinis*.⁵

The major literary genres outside of history told the Regulus story either as an *exemplum fidei*, an *exemplum patientiae*, or as a mix of the two. The most influential authors who used this story are Cicero and Seneca the Younger. Cicero, writing during the Late Republic, mentioned Regulus in many of his works, but told the story most completely in the *De Officiis*. His version was representative of the story when it was told as an *exemplum fidei* and focused on the importance of keeping an oath regardless of the consequences. Conversely, Seneca the Younger, writing under the emperors from Caligula to Nero, shifted the focus to the importance of remaining happy under torture. In works such as *De Providentia*, he used Regulus as an *exemplum patientiae*. The same story was told, but the author shifted the emphasis to make a different moral point. At *De Officiis* 3.99-101,

³ Polyb. 1.35.

⁴ Diod. Sic 23.15.2-6; Flor. 1.18. It has been noted by Walbank that instances of the story of Regulus is used to show the power of Tyche (*fortuna*) are typically Polybian (1945.6).

⁵ Liv. Per. 17-18.

Cicero describes the story of Regulus, emphasizing his speech and his motivations. He mentions the torture, but does not describe it. At *De Providentia* 3.9-10, Seneca tells about Regulus. Describing the torture in detail, he mentions that Regulus' motive is *fides*, but he claims that more suffering brings more glory. Most pre-Christian authors writing about Regulus after Seneca were influenced by both versions and emphasized Regulus' faith and endurance equally.

Scholarship on Regulus has been comparatively scant, and most previous treatments of Regulus have focused on the historicity of the story of his return to Rome after being taken prisoner.⁶ This paper is interested in determining what made Regulus' *fides* important to a Roman audience. To answer this question the actual historicity of the event is irrelevant. It is sufficient that the Romans who told and heard the story believed that it was true, or that its importance as an exemplum made historical truth unimportant. To find out what gave this story its lifeblood I will examine other exemplary stories, and place the story of Regulus within the context of exemplary discourse as defined by Matthew Roller.

In his article “Exemplarity in Roman Culture: The Cases of Horatius Cocles and Cloelia,” Matthew Roller divides the exemplary cycle into four parts: action, audience, commemoration, and imitation.⁷ Each of these aspects leads to the next, and the imitation is a new action, which renews the cycle. The story of Regulus displayed all of these categories. His action was his return to Carthage on oath. The gods and the senate acted as his main audiences, although the Carthaginians provided a third audience. Stories that

⁶ Mix 1970 and Frank 1926. I am convinced by Frank's brief argument that the story is at least a version of an historical event.

⁷ Roller 2004.

commemorated Regulus' action abounded in ancient literature. Imitation is a double category in that an exemplary figure both imitates and hopes to be imitated. Regulus imitated the ancestors who represented the same broad categories of virtue, such as honoring religion, and was imitated by others in these same categories.

It is clear from the number of times that the words *exemplum* and *fides* appeared in the story of Regulus that Roman authors thought of him as an *exemplum fidei*, although this particular combination of words does not appear in extant texts.⁸ When Regulus was described as an *exemplum fidei*, the focus was on his interaction with the Carthaginians and the senate.

Cicero's most complete account of the story displays this focus, *De Officiis* (3.99-100):

M. Atilius Regulus, cum consul iterum in Africa ex insidiis captus esset duce Xanthippo Lacedaemonio, imperatore autem patre Hannibal Hamilcare, iuratus missus est ad senatum, ut nisi redditи essent Poenis captivi nobiles quidam, rediret ipse Carthaginem. Is cum Romam venisset, utilitatis speciem videbat, sed eam, ut res declarat, falsam iudicavit; quae erat talis: manere in patria, esse domui suae cum uxore, cum liberis, quam calamitatem accepisset in bello communem fortunae bellicae iudicantem tenere consularis dignitatis gradum. Quis haec negat esse utilia? quem censes? Magnitudo animi et fortitudo negat. [100] Num locupletiores quaeris auctores? Harum enim est virtutum proprium nihil extimescere, omnia humana despicere, nihil, quod homini accidere possit intolerandum putare. Itaque quid fecit? In senatum venit, mandata exposuit, sententiam ne diceret, recusavit; quam diu iure iurando hostium teneretur, non esse se senatorem. Atque illud etiam, ("O stultum hominem," dixerit quispiam, "et repugnantem utilitati suae!"), reddi captivos negavit esse utile; illos enim adulescentes esse et bonos duces, se iam confectum senectute. Cuius cum valuissest auctoritas, captivi retenti sunt, ipse Carthaginem rediit, neque eum caritas patriae retinuit nec suorum. Neque vero tum ignorabat se ad crudelissimum hostem et ad exquisita supplicia proficisci, sed ius iurandum conservandum putabat. Itaque tum, cum vigilando necabatur, erat in meliore causa, quam si domi senex captivus, periurus consularis remansisset.

Marcus Atilius Regulus, during his second consulship, when he had been captured in Africa by plots, while Xanthippus the Spartan was in command, but Hamilcar the father of Hannibal was the general, was sent to the Roman Senate under oath with instructions that unless certain captive nobles were returned to the Carthaginians, he himself should

⁸ Regulus is said to act according to *fides* in: Cic. *Parad.* 16, *Fin.* 2.65, *Sen.* 75, *Off.* 1.39, 3.104; *Sen. Ep.* 71.17. He is called an exemplum though *fides* is not mentioned in Val. Max. 4.4.6; Quint. *Inst.* 12.2.30. He is called an exemplum and *fides* is mentioned although both are not together in Liv. *Per.* 18; Sil. *Pun.* 6.62-555. *Sen.* calls him a *documentum fidei*, which is the same as an *exemplum fidei*, at *Prov.* 3.11.

return to Carthage. When he had come to Rome, he saw the appearance of expedience, but he judged that it was false, as the matter shows; the appearance of utility was like this: to remain in the fatherland; to be at his home with his wife and children; judging the calamity, which he had received in war as common to the lot of war, to retain consular status. Who denies that this is expedient? Whom do you think? Greatness of spirit and strength deny it. [100] Surely you don't ask for better authorities? For it is unique to these virtues to dread nothing, to despise all human things, to think that nothing, which can happen to men, is unendurable. So, what did he do? He came into the Senate, he explained his commands, and he declined to give a formal opinion: As long as he was held by the oath of an enemy, he did not think that he was a senator. And ("O foolish man," someone might say, "and adverse to his own best interests."), he denied even this, that it was expedient to return the captives; for those were young men and good leaders, but he was already weakened by old age. Since his authority had prevailed, the captives were kept, he himself returned to Carthage, and neither the affection of the fatherland nor of his family held him back. Indeed he was not unaware then that he set out to a cruel enemy and to exquisite tortures, but he was thinking that an oath must be kept. So then, when he was killed by sleep deprivation, he was in better shape than if he had remained at home a captive old man, a consular oath-breaker.⁹

The beginning and the end of the story reveal Regulus' interactions with Carthage, and the middle describes his reunion with the Senate. Cicero brought up this story in order to give an example of an occasion when an action seems expedient but is not. His main argument was about Regulus' speech to the senate. Cicero claimed that some would call Regulus stupid for arguing against an exchange that seems expedient for him. Since, however, an exchange was not expedient for the state, Regulus made the right decision, because what was expedient for the state was always expedient for the citizen. Cicero's choice of *captivus* to describe Regulus is perplexing, but it is best taken as a metaphorical use, in the sense that Regulus would be a prisoner in his own mind if he did not keep his oath.¹⁰ For Cicero this was Regulus' most important action; the subsequent return to Carthage was a necessary aftereffect.

This paper will discuss the importance of the Regulus story for a Roman audience. The first chapter will consider Regulus' action and what makes it important to

⁹ All translations are my own.

¹⁰ *De Officiis* 3.100. Dyck points out that the oxymoronic constructions *senex captivus* and *periurus consularis* highlight how shameful Regulus' situation would be if he remained in Rome (1996.625).

the Roman community. The subsequent chapter will deal with the audiences and the significance of their reactions to the interpretation of the story. The third chapter will be concerned with different types of commemoration and their use as an educational tool. The next will discuss the people whom Regulus imitates and those who imitate him. In all of these chapters the focus will be on the story of Regulus when told as an *exemplum fidei*.

Chapter 1

Action: Regulus and Fetial Law

Since Regulus was known as an *exemplum fidei* in the Roman world, evidently Romans found him exemplary for keeping his oath with Carthage. As mentioned above, none of the ancient sources used the title *exemplum fidei* in reference to Regulus, but the terms are frequently used separately to describe him. Roller defined an exemplary action as one that was widely accepted as “consequential for the Roman community at large.”¹¹ Although Roman authors took for granted that Regulus’ return to Carthage in order to keep his oath with the Carthaginians benefited the community, to a modern audience these benefits are not immediately apparent. One could argue that the action was beneficial because it prevented tension with Carthage, but the Romans remained at war with Carthage, and the Carthaginians failed to recognize the value of Regulus’ action. Considering that the Romans viewed the Carthaginians as a perfidious enemy, it is difficult to understand why it would be important to keep an oath with them.

Regulus set a precedent not only by returning voluntarily to Carthage, but also by arguing against the exchange of prisoners that would have allowed him to return to Rome with his rank restored. In most versions this exchange would have involved exchanging a number of Carthaginian nobles for Regulus alone. It sounds like an unfair trade for Rome, but the senate was seriously considering it, and Regulus had been a successful general. Part of Regulus’ appeal comes from convincing the senate to deny the exchange. His speech to the senate was based on the lack of expediency for the state to make the exchange, and Cicero noted this fact; but keeping his oath to Carthage, rather than giving

¹¹ Roller 2004.4.

the speech, made Regulus an *exemplum fidei*.¹² Evidence from other sources indicates that oath-keeping is extremely important to the state. Therefore it is necessary to examine why the Romans considered oath-keeping such an important action. By looking at other exemplary stories and Roman law, we can begin to understand the importance to the Roman community of keeping oaths, even if they were to an enemy.

In his explanation of Regulus' return to Carthage, Cicero suggested that it would have been unthinkable for any Roman to break an oath to an enemy in the time of the ancestors because the harshest penalties, which he unfortunately did not describe, were laid down for oath-breakers under the *ius fetiale*.¹³ The *ius fetiale* was the Roman code for dealing with the proper, religious conduct of international war, and determining the proper actions was the responsibility of the fetial college.¹⁴ Ancient authors agree that this law code dates back to the regal period, and some modern scholars believe that it is a Latin institution that originates from a period before the founding of the city.¹⁵ As can be seen by the *ius fetiale*, an oath was not merely a legal agreement between men, it was sanctified by the gods. Roman religion depended on ritual to obtain the favor of the gods. Breaking an oath, even with the Carthaginians, could have caused the gods to judge the Romans as unjust in war.

¹² *Off.* 3.101.

¹³ *Off.* 3.108.

¹⁴ The fetial college was responsible for determining the proper course of action, but did not have the power to enforce their decisions. For instance, if the senate thought that they should go to war, they would consult the fetial college. The *fetiales* in turn would announce either that if the Romans went to war it would be just, or if they went to war it would be unjust. This did not mean that the Romans would definitely go to war. A declaration of war required the vote of the people (Watson 1993.29).

¹⁵ Watson 1993.1.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus provides the most complete description from antiquity of the duties of the fetial college (2.72.1-9). The section of this description of fetial duties that is most relevant to Regulus states:

Ομοιως δε καν αδικεισθαι τινες υπο Ρωμαιων ενσπονδοι λεγοντες τα δικαια αιτιωαι, τουτους διαγινωσκειν τους ανδρας ει τι πεπονθασιν εκσπονδον και εαν δοξωσι τα προσηκοντα εγκαλειν τους ενοχους ταις αιτιας συλλαβοντας εκδοτους τοις αδικηθειαι παραδιδοναι τα τε περι τους πρεσβευτας αδικηματα δικαζειν και τα περι τας συνθηκας οσια φυλαττειν ειρηνην τε ποιεισθαι και γεγενημενην, εαν μη κατα τους iερους δοξηι πεπραχθαι νομους, ακυρουν και τας των στρατηγων παρανομιας, οσαι περι τε ορκους και σπονδας επιτελουνται, διαγινωσκοντας αφοσιουσθαι, περι ων κατα τους οικειους καιρους ποιησομαι τον λογον.

In the same way, if any allies saying that they were wronged by Rome demand justice, these men [fetial priests] determine whether they have suffered something against the alliance and, if they think it seemly to charge those responsible for the accusations, they hand over the gathered prisoners to the wronged parties. They also give judgment about crimes against ambassadors; they see to it that treaties are hallowed; they make peace; and peace having been made, if it does not seem to have been done in accordance with the holy laws, they make it invalid. They expiate the transgressions of the generals that were chosen to be purified, in as much as they relate to oaths and treaties, about which transgressions I will speak at the proper times.¹⁶

These duties of the fetial college, particularly its responsibility to expiate the broken oaths of generals, suggest that for as long as the Romans could remember it had been a matter of religious importance to keep an oath to an enemy and that there would be consequences for failing to do so. Regrettably, once again we are left without a description of these punishments. In spite of that, Dionysius' use of the plural in saying that he will speak about these things at the proper times implies that a description of the punishments was left out because it varied from case to case. Perhaps this is because the *fetiales* determined what would expiate the broken oath, but turned over the punishment of the offending general to another body.¹⁷

¹⁶ 2.72.5.

¹⁷ This would parallel the duties of all of the priestly bodies that advise on what should be done to expiate portents, but leave it to the senate to perform the expiation (Rasmussen 2003.47-8).

The problem with applying fetial law to Regulus is that at the time he made his oath to the Carthaginians (255 BCE), Regulus was already a Carthaginian prisoner, and Dionysius' description only mentions the fetial college's jurisdiction over generals. Regulus' status as a prisoner of war was significant because it meant that his legal rights were held in suspension and he could only become a Roman citizen through *postliminium*, which was the law by which a Roman who had been captured regained citizenship when he crossed the border of the city.¹⁸ According to Watson, *postliminium* would apply only to those returning to Rome under creditable circumstances, for instance through an approved exchange of prisoners.¹⁹ Until he met the requirements for *postliminium* Regulus was considered a Carthaginian slave. If he had made the oath while he was still a Roman general, then it would fall clearly under the *ius fetiale* as described by Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Legally, Regulus was a Carthaginian slave, and his actions showed that he accepted this status, whereas the actions of the senate showed that they were ready to accept him back as their equal. This leaves two possibilities for interpreting Regulus' action. Either, as he proposes, his actions are the responsibility of the Carthaginians and his oath is with them so fetial law does not apply to him; or as the senate proposes, he is a Roman citizen and his oath is with the enemy, which still leaves the question of fetial law unanswered.

If we accept Regulus as a Carthaginian slave, he acts outside of Roman law, and yet he maintains the mindset of a Roman. Although he will have made an oath with his masters, if the Romans should harbor Regulus, they would be harboring a Carthaginian

¹⁸ Gai. *Inst.* 1.129.

¹⁹ Watson 1993.41-42.

traitor. In this scenario, if the Carthaginians made a formal complaint, the *fetiales* would determine whether Rome had offended them and what should be done about it. The most logical course would be for the Carthaginians to demand that Regulus return to Carthage. If the senate refused to hand him over, then Rome could be accused of waging an unjust war.²⁰ Handing over a Roman citizen who had wronged a foreign state to that state was called a *deditio*, and it freed the Roman state from all liability for the actions of the offender.²¹ Regulus, loyal to Rome even if he was no longer a citizen, had to return to Carthage to keep Rome from any injustice.

The second option is that because of the mission, which he was given by the Carthaginians, Regulus became a Roman once more. If he were to argue for the exchange and succeed, he would certainly regain his status. Since the assumption on all sides is that he will do this, others would reasonably treat him as a Roman citizen. Only Regulus knew that he would argue against the exchange and as a result he refused the rights of *postliminium*.²² When Regulus made his unexpected speech and revealed that the exchange would harm Rome and for the good of the state he would return to Carthage, only then did the others realize that his status was not so secure. The Romans thought of him as one of them and wished for him to stay, but they allowed him to go because they believed that he was bound to his oath by fetial law. The problem arises that, even if he is a Roman citizen, he no longer holds the position of a general, and since Dionysius of

²⁰ Watson 1993.38.

²¹ Watson 1993.37. The example that Watson cites from Livy for a *deditio* does involve a general who made a *sponsio* with another country that was not authorized by the Roman people, and so it is not certain that any citizen who had privately wronged another state could be handed over. However, Watson argues based on the wording of the *deditio* and analogy with Roman private law that the *deditio* would apply broadly to offending citizens.

²² Mix 1970.20 notes that Regulus rejects *postliminium* and therefore the rights of citizenship by returning to Carthage in the context of explaining why Augustine might be correct in saying that Regulus' name was deleted from the senate rolls.

Halicarnassus only mentions generals his relation to fetial law is unclear. It is likely that the same sector of fetial duty mentioned above would cover this circumstance, i.e., the Carthaginians could make a formal complaint and Regulus would have to return.

A combination of these options is likely; Regulus acted believing that he was a Carthaginian prisoner, but all others acted believing that he was a Roman. This may have been because of the unclear requirements for *postliminium*. The senate may have believed that his return to Rome with the permission of Carthage was enough, and that all of his rights were restored, whereas Regulus believed that the oath bound him as a Carthaginian prisoner unless he secured the release of their prisoners.²³ For the concerns of this paper the beliefs of others, specifically the Roman populace, carry more weight than the concerns of Regulus because the other Romans will commemorate Regulus' action and interpret it as an *exemplum fidei*. Also, in every permutation of events fetial law requires Regulus to return to Carthage because by doing so he would ensure that Rome wages a just war.

As Watson remarked, “The fetial system was devised to keep the peace or, if all else failed, ensure that the gods declared a legal verdict in favor of the Romans before the fighting began.”²⁴ The formula used by the fetial priests to declare war called all of the heavenly gods to witness that the enemy was unjust.²⁵ Surprisingly, they did not ask the gods to favor them, but rather to be neutral judges of the action. Thus, continuing to wage the war justly was of foremost importance for Roman success, as failing to observe the

²³ Pompon. *Dig.* 49.15.5.

²⁴ Watson 1993.29-30.

²⁵ Liv. 1.32.10.

rules could anger the gods and cause them to favor the opposing side. One component of maintaining a just war was keeping oaths made to the enemy.

In international Roman law, breaking an oath with the enemy was not so important because of the enemy's reaction but rather because of the gods' reaction. When the Romans made a treaty, which is a sort of oath between nations, the *pater patratus* (chosen by the fetial college) would strike a pig and say "If [the Roman people] first failed in this through fraud by public agreement, then on that day, Jupiter, thus strike the Roman people as I strike this pig; strike with as much more force as you are able and are strong."²⁶ If the Romans broke the treaty, they could expect punishment from the gods and not the enemy. If an individual broke an oath it would also affect the judgment of the gods, as the following stories reveal.

The stories of Postumius, Mancinus, Cloelia, and an unnamed Hannibalic prisoner all have important similarities to that of Regulus. Cicero himself briefly mentioned three of these narratives to support his argument that Regulus was right in returning to Carthage. A close examination of these exemplary characters answers some of the questions about the Regulus story that cannot be answered by reading about Regulus in the light of fetial law. They help to clarify the importance of maintaining just relations with enemy states in order to please the gods, the range of Romans affected by oaths, and the consequences for those who did break oaths.

According to Livy, when Spurius Postumius and T. Veturius were consuls (321 BCE), they lost a battle and gave a particular kind of oath, a *sponsio*, to the Samnites. A *sponsio* constituted an agreement that they would arrange for a peace treaty when he

²⁶ Liv. 1.24.8.

returned to Rome. Instead of doing this, Sp. Postumius went back to Rome and argued in the senate that the Roman people were not bound by the agreement, but only he and the others involved. He claimed that he and those who made the *sponsio* should be handed over to the Samnites naked and in chains.²⁷ In a key segment of the speech he addressed the gods,

Vos, di immortales, precor quaeoque, si vobis non fuit cordi Sp. Postumium T. Veturium consules cum Samnitibus prospere bellum gerere, at vos satis habeatis vidisse nos sub iugum missos, vidisse sponsione infami obligatos, videre nudos vincitosque hostibus deditos, omnem iram hostium nostris capitibus excipientes; nouos consules legionesque Romanas ita cum Samnite gerere bellum velitis, ut omnia ante nos consules bella gesta sunt.

You, immortal gods, I pray and I beseech, if it was not your will that Sp. Postumius and T. Veturius the consuls should wage war successfully against the Samnites, may you be satisfied having seen us sent under the yoke, having seen us bound by a shameful *sponsio*, seeing us handed over to the enemy naked and bound, receiving all the wrath of the enemy on our own heads. May you determine that the new consuls and Roman legions wage war with the Samnites as all wars were waged before we were consuls.²⁸

Here Postumius revealed that the gods were the primary audience of oaths. He did not care what the Samnites thought, or if they would accept the surrender as a completion of the oath, which they incidentally did not. It was enough if the gods accepted the surrender and favored the Roman people in the continuation of the war. Regulus differed slightly because his oath was not a *sponsio*, but Cicero suggested that all oaths were sanctified by the gods and also considered Regulus' oath a *condicio* or *pactio* of war.²⁹

Another story about Postumius sheds some light on the case of Regulus. Livy records that after Postumius was handed over to the enemy and the fetial declared that the Romans had fulfilled their obligation, "When these things had been said by the fetial, Postumius hit the fetial's leg as hard as he was able with his knee and said in a clear

²⁷ Liv. 9.5 – 9.10.

²⁸ Liv. 9.8.8-10.

²⁹ Off. 3.104, 108.

voice that he was a Samnite citizen and the fetial was violated by him against the law of the tribes; for this reason [he said that] the Romans would wage war more justly” (*haec dicenti fetiali Postumius genu femur quanta maxime poterat vi perculit et clara voce ait se Samnitem civem esse, illum legatum [fetiale] a se contra ius gentium violatum; eo iustius bellum gesturos*).³⁰ Clearly this is not an exact parallel to Regulus as he did not go back to Carthage to garner favor for the Romans in an underhanded fashion, but it does clarify Regulus’ status as a non-Roman upon his return to Rome.

Since Regulus was a prisoner of war the Carthaginians were responsible for his actions, despite the Roman belief that he has regained citizenship through *postliminium*. For as long as the Romans kept the Carthaginian prisoners, Regulus was bound by a sacred oath to return to Carthage and therefore he was the responsibility of Carthaginians. More importantly, this passage elucidates the relationship between fetial law, the importance of just war, and the gods. The words and actions of Postumius suggest that he believed that by following the letter of fetial law the Romans were waging a just war, which would influence the gods.

Another general, Mancinus, made a treaty with the enemy during the Numantine war because of heavy losses on the Roman side. The Romans refused to honor the treaty that Mancinus had made with the Numantines. According to Appian the Numantine ambassadors wanted the Romans to hand Mancinus over. He argued that he was not to blame and should not be handed over to the Numantines because he had inherited a worn-out, ill-supplied army from his predecessor Pompeius.³¹ However, Cicero did not mention that the Numantines made this request and claimed that Mancinus advocated a bill, which

³⁰ Liv. 9.10.10.

³¹ App. Hisp. 83.

declared that he should be handed over to the Numantines.³² In Cicero, Mancinus was another example of a man who made an oath to an enemy and knew that he must accept the consequences when that oath was broken. Regulus was a more righteous exemplum than these generals because he handed himself over to the enemy without ever breaking an oath.

Livy records the story of a Roman girl named Cloelia. During a war with the Etruscan king, Lars Porsenna, Cloelia was one of many hostages given to the Etruscans as part of a truce. She escaped her guards and swam across the Tiber with a group of maidens. Cloelia, although she had not made an oath to the enemy directly, acted in violation of a peace treaty with the Etruscans. Although the Etruscan king respected her bravery, he said that if she was not returned he would consider the truce broken, but also promised that if she were surrendered to him, he would return her unharmed to her family when the war was over. Here Livy states, “The Romans restored the proof of peace [Cloelia] on account of the treaty” (*Romani pignus pacis ex foedere restituerunt*) in the next sentence he points out that this was necessary for *fides*.³³ Therefore, if an individual Roman were to invalidate a treaty without the sanction of the state, that person would be returned to the enemy to secure the honesty of the Roman people. Thus the action of an individual who is not a Roman citizen, for example a prisoner of war or a woman, can affect the *fides* of the entire state.

Cicero himself recounts tales of ancestors who broke their oaths. For instance, Cicero reports that in the Second Punic War Hannibal sent prisoners to Rome under conditions similar to those of Regulus. Although they were unable to arrange an

³² *Off.* 3.109.

³³ Livy 2.13.

exchange of prisoners, these men, or possibly only one of them, used tricks to break their oaths and remain in Rome. One or more of them returned to Hannibal and then claimed to have left something in Rome. Afterward they said that the first return to Hannibal had freed them of their promise. Considering the spirit of the promise to be more important than the exact wording, the Roman censors punished these men by demoting them to the lowest class, which deprived them of the right to vote.³⁴

Since these prisoners had the same status as Regulus when they made the oath, it is possible that Regulus would have faced a punishment like this one if he had remained in Rome. The treatment of these prisoners was harsh considering that Postumius, who came before them, was remembered fondly for following the letter of the law. The fact that the senate was willing to accept Regulus makes it unlikely that this punishment was standard in his time. It is more likely that, since Roman law had its basis in tradition, these men were punished for failing to follow the example of Regulus, who was more recent than Postumius.

An examination of fetial law and similar exemplary stories in combination clarifies the position of Regulus as an *exemplum fidei*. Fetial law shows that Regulus' obligations are not only to men, but also to the gods. The stories of Postumius and Mancinus along with fetial law reveal that if Regulus did break his oath to return to Carthage, the appropriate punishment would be to return him to Carthage. Even if the senate chose not to return him, surrendering him to the enemy would be the proper action in accordance with fetial law and the religious conduct of the war. Regulus took the

³⁴ *Off.* 3.113-115.

decision out of their hands and maintained his own honor and the honor of the Roman people by returning to the Carthaginians before any oaths were broken.

Chapter 2

Audience: Romans, Carthaginians, Gods

An audience of an exemplary action was described by Roller as a group of eyewitnesses who observed the action, placed it in an ethical category, and decided whether it is bad or good. He added that the audience was usually a subset of the Roman community, although in military situations the enemy could serve as a second audience.³⁵ In the story that this paper examines, Regulus exemplified the ethical category *fides*. This is an unusual category in that it includes a third audience. The gods qualify as an audience for *fides* because they are called upon to witness that those who take oaths follow through on the promised action and to judge whether or not they have kept faith.

Regulus had three primary audiences as an *exemplum fidei*: the senate, the Carthaginians, and the gods. The senate was the human audience for his speech and his decision to return to Carthage, the Carthaginians witnessed his actual return and possibly his speech,³⁶ and the gods were the foremost witnesses of his oath according to the *ius fetiale*. These audiences interpreted Regulus' action in different ways, and the reaction of each reveals a different aspect of the importance of Regulus' story to the Roman people. Later Roman authors and their readers became both secondary witnesses to all of Regulus' deeds and potential imitators of these deeds.

Accounts of Regulus often mentioned the reactions of the senate to his return to Carthage, and more often to his speech. For instance Horace wrote, “Until the chief actor [Regulus] reinforced the uncertain senators with such advice as was never given at any other time and, as an outstanding exile among grieving friends, went forth” (*donec*

³⁵ Roller 2004.5.

³⁶ Sil. Pun. 6.450-493. In this segment, the Carthaginians are summoned to the senate and the Carthaginian ambassadors are sent away at the end of Regulus' speech.

labantis consilio patres/firmaret auctor numquam alias dato/ interque maerentis amicos/ egregius properaret exul).³⁷ The senators were wavering in their decision, but they were swayed by Regulus' *auctoritas* and his speech to vote against an exchange of prisoners. Horace did not directly use the term *auctoritas* in this poem, but by using the term *auctor* to refer to Regulus, he called to mind the concept. With respect to a single man giving a speech, *auctoritas* described his ability to persuade based either on his words or on his actions.³⁸ These actions may be in the past, and so Regulus would have *auctoritas* not only through his present words but also because of his early success as a general and record as a two-time Roman consul.

The main thrust of Regulus' argument in Horace was that warriors were no longer valuable to the state once they had been prisoners because the experience made them weak. Approval of this speech by the senate also implied their approval of his return to Carthage, since Regulus has been a prisoner and would no longer be valuable to Rome as a soldier. Cicero recorded the approval of the senate somewhat less clearly, but did suggest that the morals of the time were such that any man in Regulus' position would have returned to Carthage.³⁹ In both of these narratives the senate heard Regulus' speech and approved his decision. By approving his speech the senators implicitly endorsed his return to Carthage, which was the only remaining option that allowed him to keep his oath.

Approval of the senate stood in for that of the Roman community at large and reinforced Roman morals. The senate showed that not only Regulus, but all Romans

³⁷ *Carm.* 3.5.45-48.

³⁸ *TLL* 2.1218.8-11 s.v. *auctoritas*.

³⁹ *Off.* 3.108.

agreed to the importance of *fides*. Senators explicitly approved his argument that the exchange was not good for the Roman state, which implicitly meant that he would have to return to Carthage. The senators may have mourned as they escorted their friend away, but they allowed him to leave and only his wife and children tried to stop him. Notably, in Silius Italicus, even the Roman senators are tempted to restrain Regulus and keep him at Rome, but they do not.⁴⁰ By reporting their internal struggle Silius Italicus brought a problematic aspect of the Regulus story to the forefront. In order for Regulus to have authority in his speech and to become a true Roman exemplum it was necessary that the senators treat him as a Roman citizen. Conversely, for him to exemplify *fides* he had to keep his oath and return to Carthage as a slave. As discussed above, it is not clear whether he was legally a Roman citizen or a Carthaginian slave. The conflict between a desire to restrain Regulus and the knowledge that he must go corresponds to the conflict between the desire to treat Regulus as a Roman citizen and the knowledge that he is still bound as a Carthaginian slave.

The Carthaginians were an unusual audience to Regulus' action because they did not approve. As Roller notes, in the stories of Horatius and Cloelia even the enemies approved and rewarded each of them for their actions; Horatius burned the Sublician Bridge to keep the enemy from crossing, and Cloelia swam the Tiber to escape her captors. The Etruscan king Porsenna approved of Cloelia even though her actions went against a treaty that Rome had made with the Etruscans.⁴¹ There are historical reasons that the stories were told in this way. Horatius and Cloelia performed their deeds during the war between the Romans and Etruscans, when Porsenna was leading the Etruscans.

⁴⁰ *Pun.* 6.495-496.

⁴¹ Liv. 2.10-13; Roller 2004.4.

The Etruscans will eventually be integrated into Roman society, and so it is fitting that they are presented as noble enemies who share Roman values and reward good deeds.⁴²

Conversely, the Carthaginians will eventually be completely destroyed by the Romans, and so it is appropriate that they are portrayed as wicked enemies who ignore Roman values and even punish good deeds.⁴³ The cruelty of the Carthaginians was an important element of the Regulus story because his awareness that they would treat him cruelly added to the valor of his return. It is a standard part of describing Regulus to note that he realized that when he returned to Carthage he would be tortured. He realized that the Carthaginians were not a noble enemy and that they would kill him although he had kept faith.

Sometimes the story of Regulus was told in such a way that it emphasized the wickedness of the Carthaginians instead of the *fides* of Regulus. For instance, in the *Philippics* Cicero mentions Regulus only to make a point about how cruel Dolabella was because he was crueler than the Carthaginians who tortured Regulus. This shows that he considered the torture of Regulus by the Carthaginians to be an extreme act of cruelty.

At least that was the Roman view typically reported; the Carthaginians, however, may have believed that Regulus broke his oath in the spirit if not the wording. As Cicero observed, Regulus could have told the Carthaginians that he would not argue for an exchange without making the trip to Rome. This would not have altered the outcome significantly; there would be no exchange of prisoners and Regulus would remain in Carthage. Cicero argued that this was one of the most remarkable things about Regulus;

⁴² The Etruscans here are an example of the “incorporated outsider who embodied Rome’s morally upright past” mentioned by Dench (1995.68).

⁴³ Dench discusses the role of the Carthaginians as the barbarian enemy of Greek Rome (1995.73).

he did not trust his own opinion but thought that the decision should be put to a vote in the senate.⁴⁴

However, it is likely that the Carthaginians would not have agreed with this interpretation. They went to the expense to send him to Rome under an oath that if he did not succeed in organizing an exchange of prisoners he would return. It is difficult to imagine such an oath in which it would not be implicit that Regulus should at least attempt to organize the exchange. Then instead of arranging the exchange he argues against it in the Roman senate. Noticing this aspect of the story, Augustine might have mentioned in his *Epistulae* that the senate struck Regulus' name from its rolls for perjury. He may have believed that even the Roman senate thought that Regulus had perjured himself by arguing against the Carthaginian exchange. I think, however, that there was probably a change of subject between the sentence about Regulus and the segment about people who perjured themselves, so it seems more likely that Augustine was speaking about one of the Hannibalic prisoners described by Cicero.⁴⁵

This attention to the wording of an oath was a significant and complicated aspect of Roman *fides*. The Roman people avoided an obligation by handing Spurius Postumius over to the Samnites.⁴⁶ In contrast, the Hannibalic prisoners mentioned above were punished when they attempted to avoid punishment by obeying the strict wording of the oath but avoiding the spirit.⁴⁷ According to these examples, which are admittedly limited, the important aspect is that the person responsible for the oath should return to the enemy. As long as this happened the Romans were morally justified in war and the

⁴⁴ *Off.* 3.110.

⁴⁵ August. *Ep.* 125. This is noted by Mix 1970.20.

⁴⁶ Liv. 9.8-10.

⁴⁷ *Off.* 3.113-5.

enemy could punish the responsible party. However, not all audiences interpreted this action in the same way. Enemies such as the Carthaginians and the Samnites were not satisfied.

As stated above, Romans swore oaths with the gods as witnesses. The gods were called upon to act as fair arbiters and determine whether or not the actions of the person who gave the oath were just. In this capacity the gods were Regulus' most important audience. Although the gods did not give any direct indication of their approval or disapproval in the story generally told, the Romans must have presumed that the gods approved. Otherwise they would be unlikely to tell the story as an exemplum, because imitation of the action would not benefit the community.

One might argue that Regulus' subsequent torture suggested that the gods did not approve of his action. The judgment of the gods, however, did not always affect the outcome of an action. Watson argued that the Romans still believed that a war had been just and the gods had judged in their favor even if they lost in the end. They believed that they had failed to execute the gods' judgment. The gods had no responsibility to help them, only to judge the morality of the war.⁴⁸ Similarly, although Regulus was punished for returning to Carthage, this suggested neither approval nor disapproval from the gods. Many passages from Roman authors argued that Regulus' torture was not a punishment, but that he was actually blessed because he maintained his virtue and he would be remembered.⁴⁹

Among surviving accounts, only Valerius Maximus directly addressed the gods' approval of Regulus. He proposed a second reason that the gods may have allowed

⁴⁸ Watson 1993.19.

⁴⁹ Cic. *Pis.* 43; *Fin.* 2.65, 5.83; *Tusc.* 5.5.14-16; Sen. *Prov.* 3; *Tranq.* 16.4.; *Ep.* 71.17.

Regulus to suffer, “Truly the immortal gods were able to soothe the wild rage [of the Carthaginians]. So that the glory of Regulus would be greater, however, they allowed the Carthaginians to employ their own nature” (*potuerunt profecto dii immortales efferatam mitigare saeuitiam. ceterum, quo clarior esset Atilii gloria, Karthaginienses moribus suis uti passi sunt*).⁵⁰ The gods clearly approved of Regulus in this passage. They only allowed him to suffer because they wanted for him to become a great Roman exemplum.

The gods witnessed Regulus’ return to Carthage and judged that he had kept his oath, which qualified him as morally good in the ethical category *fides*. It is significant that the Romans believed that the gods would have approved Regulus’ action, because the gods were thought to be impartial judges.⁵¹ That they approved of Regulus is particularly important considering that the Romans approved his action and the Carthaginians did not. It was a further assurance that the Romans were just and the Carthaginians were not. Regulus represented Roman *fides* in this story and, in approving his action, the gods approved Roman ethics.

According to Roller, in commemorating an exemplary deed, the author often emphasized the reaction of the primary audience. Thus, when the secondary audience learned of the deed, they were aware of the ethical evaluation of the primary audience. They were necessarily influenced by this evaluation, although they may have disagreed or reinterpreted it.⁵² The later Roman community reading about Regulus in Horace and

⁵⁰ Val. Max. 1.1.14.

⁵¹ Watson 1993.13-9 points out that the formulation used by the *fetiales* to call upon the gods is different from the wording of prayers in that it does not ask for the gods to favor the Roman side nor do the *fetiales* promise the gods anything in return. It is reasonable that private oaths would call upon the gods in a similar manner.

⁵² Roller 2004.4-5.

Cicero would have been influenced particularly by the approval of the senate, as an audience with which it could identify.

The reading audience was also influenced by another secondary audience, the author. Some authors, such as Cicero, influenced the decision of the audience by inserting their own evaluation. Cicero desired for his audience to approve of Regulus and even defended him from imagined detractors.⁵³ Horace encouraged his audience to judge Regulus as a good exemplum by using positive language to describe him. The language that he used to introduce him, “The provident mind of Regulus, who dissented from shameful conditions, foretold this” (*hoc caverat mens provida Reguli/ dissentientis condicionibus/ foedis*), suggested Horace’s approval.⁵⁴ These two authors represent the extremes of authorial attempts to influence the audience; Cicero told his audience what to think, whereas Horace used adjectives to show his approval.

The audience was a necessary element of the exemplary cycle, since they had to watch and approve the action to give it meaning. In the case of Regulus there were three primary audiences that evaluated the action. Each evaluation from these audiences adds nuance to the meaning of the Regulus story. The senate approved and showed that the Roman state considered *fides* to be of the utmost importance. Disapproval from the Carthaginians revealed that they were a wicked enemy that did not respect noble deeds. The approval of the gods, by showing that both Regulus and the Roman people are correct in their interpretation of the situation, reinforced Roman ethical codes.

⁵³ *Off.* 3.99-111.

⁵⁴ *Carm.* 3.5.13-5.

Chapter 3

Commemoration: Regulus Across the Genres

The two general categories of commemoration in the ancient world were textual and visual. In the case of Regulus the textual commemorations are the only ones that have certainly survived, although Silius Italicus did describe a painting of the First Punic War which provides a basis for how a visual representation of Regulus might have looked. Nevertheless, Regulus' action was commemorated in over thirty texts of which I am aware, sometimes in great detail and other times as a brief reference. Genres including reference literature, law, history, oratory, poetry, and philosophy mentioned Regulus. The lasting popularity of Regulus and the fact that the Romans used his life to exemplify more than one quality are a testament to his importance in Rome.

In this chapter the focus expands from *fides* to include other categories of commemoration. This is in part because many commemorations include *fides* while emphasizing a different aspect of Regulus' character. Expanding the focus of this chapter will also show the importance of Regulus on a larger scale and the ability of the Romans to adapt an exemplum to suit different genres and time periods. Commemoration was also closely linked to imitation because commemorations were made in order to induce imitation. The categories overlapped at times and parts of this chapter look ahead to the next.

As Roller states, “the expectation that the elements of exemplary discourse stuck together was so strong that any given element could attract or spawn the others.”⁵⁵ In other words, Romans so expected an exemplary cycle that they would create stories to fulfill these expectations. For instance they may have assumed that an unidentified visual

⁵⁵ Roller 2004.7.

monument was related to a story that it seemed to match, because they expected that the action would have been commemorated by the original audience. This tendency to expect and even create an exemplary cycle is true of Classicists today as well, as is shown in the case of Regulus. Many exempla were commemorated with some visual representation such as a statue or a coin, which contributed to the number of statues in the Forum.⁵⁶ No identifiable representations of Regulus have survived to the present day and the one mentioned by Silius Italicus is probably not a description of a real painting, and yet some visual representations have been initially identified as Regulus, although later scholars decided that these identifications were inconclusive due to a lack of positive evidence.

Coins minted by L. Livineius Regulus, a praetor c.46-45 BCE, show a male head on the obverse and read REGVLVS along the side. Some of these coins have no further markings and the man was originally identified as M. Atilius Regulus, however other issues have the letters PR, which identify the man as a praetor and so he cannot be the Regulus who was consul in 255 BCE.⁵⁷ There are also three gems with a depiction of a nail on the back, which has been interpreted as a symbol of torture, and a man on the front who has been identified as Regulus because his name is inscribed on one of them. However, these gems are known only through plaster casts from the collection of Tommaso Cades, a nineteenth-century gem carver, the contents of whose collection of ancient and modern works are difficult to separate since he often modified ancient gems and/or added inscriptions.⁵⁸ There is also a statue from the Roman era in Brocklesby Park

⁵⁶ See Roller 2004.11-19, 44 -50 for an analysis of the visual representations of Horatius Cocles and Cloelia.

⁵⁷ Longo 1958-66.905, Crawford 2001.506.

⁵⁸ Longo 1958-66.905, Hartwick 1983.336.

in Britain with a modern inscription that states that it is Regulus; however, it is likely that the statue was identified based either on the coins or the gems.⁵⁹

The identification of all of these objects from the nineteenth century to the present day as Regulus despite scanty evidence reveals the importance of commemoration in the exemplary cycle. Considering that visual representation was common and that a number of objects have not survived to the modern day, it is reasonable to think that there were some visual representations of Regulus. Depicting Regulus would, however, present a problem because in portraying his most memorable acts, turning back to Carthage or making a speech before the senate, it would be nearly impossible to differentiate him from other orators or prisoners. Other exempla either have a distinct feature, such as Mucius' missing hand, or perform a unique action, such as Horatius swimming the Tiber fully armed. This does not mean that Regulus' deed was not commemorated in art, but rather that it would be difficult to identify without an inscription.

Silius Italicus presented a solution to the difficulty of representing Regulus visually. In the *Punica*, Hannibal sees a wall-painting at a temple in Litternum, which depicts the events of the First Punic War. The first thing that he notices is Regulus urging the senate to war and he sees other important scenes from Regulus' life such as his successful battle and his defeat of the serpent. Hannibal is upset by the content and orders his troops to burn these paintings.⁶⁰ It is unlikely, though possible, that such a painting truly existed at Litternum. The scene is a clear reference to Aeneas viewing the paintings of the Trojan War in Carthage, which places it in the realm of legend.⁶¹ It is, however,

⁵⁹ Longo 1958-66.906.

⁶⁰ *Pun.* 6.653-716.

⁶¹ Verg. *Aen.* 1.455-493.

significant that Silius Italicus was able to imagine such a painting in a Roman town.

According to Holliday, wall paintings commemorating triumphs were common in Rome by the late first century BCE.⁶² These paintings were carried in the triumphal procession and then either displayed in the general's house or, as here, dedicated at a temple.⁶³ The painting described by Silius Italicus is unusual because it represents an entire war rather than the deeds of one general, but it is reasonable to believe that at the end of a war the state might have commissioned such a painting. Therefore a narrative painting of the events of the First Punic War with an emphasis on the role of Regulus was plausible.

Commemorations of exemplary deeds, whether through literature or visual representations, were the primary learning method for Romans. Quintilian claimed:

Neque ea solum quae talibus disciplinis continentur, sed magis etiam quae sunt tradita antiquitus dicta ac facta praclare et nosse et animo semper agitare conveniet. Quae profecto nusquam plura maioraque quam in nostrae civitatis monumentis reperiuntur. An fortitudinem, iustitiam, fidem, continentiam, frugalitatem, contemptum doloris ac mortis melius alii docebunt quam Fabricii, Curii, Reguli, Decii, Mucii, aliique innumerabiles? Quantum enim Graeci praecepsit valent, tantum Romani, quod est maius, exemplis.

These things [philosophical precepts] are not the only ones which are included in such education, but even more so ancient sayings and deeds, which were handed down, will be fit to always turn over in our minds and to have learned thoroughly. Truly nowhere will more abundant or greater examples be found than in the monuments of our city. What others will teach bravery, justice, trust, restraint, frugality, contempt of pain and of death better than the Fabricii, the Curii, the Reguli, the Decii, the Mucii, and other countless examples? Since as much as the Greeks are strong in precepts, the Romans are equally strong in exempla, which is better.⁶⁴

These comments illustrate the importance of exempla to Roman education and to the Roman self-image.⁶⁵ The Romans were proud that their exempla were the foundation of

⁶² Holliday 2002.xviii.

⁶³ Holliday 2002.80.

⁶⁴ *Inst.* 12.2.29.

⁶⁵ Chaplin 2000.11-15 provides more examples from Roman authors who describe the importance of exempla in education. She also summarizes the ways in which these exempla functioned in a variety of educational settings and their particular importance in oratory.

their education. His inclusion on the list shows that Regulus was one of the exempla that Quintilian considered most important.

Regulus was mentioned in three other lists like the one from Quintilian, where no context is provided for the story, but the reader is expected to understand the relationship based on prior knowledge of the stories.⁶⁶ The audience could be expected to know these stories, because they were commemorated not only in literary texts, but also in public speeches, statues, and were commonly used in schools. The many methods of commemoration allowed them to reach a Roman audience that included the literate and illiterate alike.

Exempla held a special significance for those who used their stories to practice oratory. Regulus was mentioned in one of the Elder Seneca's example speeches as supporting evidence that even brave men could be captured.⁶⁷ This reference, combined with Horace's use of the story to argue the opposite, shows that orators went out of their way to use exempla and interpreted them in different ways depending on the point that they wished to make.

The story of Regulus was used by Pomponius as quoted in the *Digesta* in order to clarify a legal point about *postliminium*. Normally, a prisoner of war regained his rights through *postliminium* as soon as he crossed the borders of Rome; however, it was decided that Regulus did not regain his rights because he did not intend to remain in Rome.⁶⁸ The wording in this passage (*responsum est*) suggests that somebody asked Pomponius about *postliminium* and he still felt that the story of Regulus was applicable to the law in his

⁶⁶ Roller 2004.2 notes that this is common with exempla. These lists appear in Cic. *Sen.* 20, Cic. *Tusc.* 5.5.14-16, and Apul. *Apol.* 18.11.

⁶⁷ *Controv.* 5.7.

⁶⁸ 49.15.5.

own time, the middle of the second century CE. The use of the story in a legal decision demonstrates that the Romans did not think of Regulus as a distant legend to be admired, but rather they saw him as a real person whose actions were a valid basis for a legal argument. They took exempla seriously and even enforced imitation of their deeds.

Of the historians who wrote about Regulus in Latin, none of their descriptions survives in its original form. Happily, summaries of Tuditanus, Trogus, and Livy do survive. All of these summaries are extremely abbreviated and it is difficult to tell what elements would have been emphasized in the originals, but they do all tell about Regulus' military success, capture, return to Rome, and torture.⁶⁹ This contrast between his success and his downfall may suggest that they emphasized the role of *fortuna* in Regulus' life more than his *fides*. This contrast may have been handed down to them by Greek historians such as Polybius, who emphasized the change in Regulus' fortune as a moral lesson. Polybius stressed that Regulus desired harsh terms from the Carthaginians while he was successful and so caused his own downfall. This version did not include his return to Rome or his eventual torture.

Considering the summary it is likely that Livy followed this model, but modified it to fit the Roman perspective.⁷⁰ He included Regulus' return to Rome and his oath so that Regulus remained a positive exemplum. In the summary of Livy particularly, the wording *fide custodita* suggests that *fides* was important. Roman historians commemorated the *fides* of Regulus in its full context, which allowed the reader to

⁶⁹ Gell. *NA* 7.3-4, Liv. *Per.* 17-8.

⁷⁰ This is similar to Chaplin's interpretation of the difference between Polybius' representation and Livy's. She argues that whereas Polybius uses Regulus only as an example of Fortune's fickleness, Livy's interpretation is ambiguous and contains evidence of both danger and success, although she focuses more on his success in battle than on his speech in Rome (2000.24).

understand the entire situation. Regulus managed to remain victorious even in defeat by keeping his oath and winning fame.

Cicero mentioned Regulus in two speeches, *Pro Sestio* and *In Pisonem*. In the *Pro Sestio*, responding to Clodius, he said, “You even remind me about Marcus Atilius Regulus, who preferred to return voluntarily to Carthage for punishment rather than to remain at Rome without those captives about whom he had been sent to the senate” (*tu mihi etiam M. Atilium Regulum commemoras, qui redire ipse Carthaginem sua voluntate ad supplicium quam sine iis captivis de quibus ad senatum missus erat Romae manere maluerit*).⁷¹ Cicero went on to contend that he himself was clearly needed by Rome because the senate commended him to the protection of foreign nations and the city was gloomy without him.⁷² It is clear from the beginning of this passage that Clodius is the one who originally used Regulus as an example, which is important because it shows that the story was popular with orators other than Cicero. It also shows that even a comparison with a positive exemplum can be an insult, as Clodius could only have been insulting Cicero under the circumstances; they were representing the opposing parties of the case. During the *In Pisonem* Cicero used Regulus to make a point that some people like Regulus suffered undeservedly through fortune, which was not a true punishment.⁷³ These are both brief references and Cicero clearly expected that his audience would know enough details of the story to understand his argument. Orations commemorated the deed and at the same time revealed that there were enough commemorations in ancient Rome that the audience assembled for a trial or in the senate would be familiar with the story.

⁷¹ 127.

⁷² 128.

⁷³ 19.

Only two poems commemorating the deeds of Regulus survive, Horace *Carmina* 3.5 and Silius Italicus *Punica* 6.62-555, although there is fragmentary evidence in Festus that more may have existed.⁷⁴ Horace commemorated the speech of Regulus in light of its relevance to contemporary politics. The Roman soldiers held captive by the Parthians should not be ransomed because, as Regulus argued, they would no longer be fit to serve Rome. The commemoration tied the event to the present day and, by arguing that the state should continue to take the advice of Regulus, perpetuated the benefits of the deed. Horace also recalled the sacrifice that Regulus made for the state in returning to Carthage after giving this advice, a sacrifice that added weight to his words.

The segment in Silius Italicus is from an epic about the Second Punic War. It commemorated the deeds of Regulus in more detail than any other extant text, providing the complete context of events. The story of Regulus is a digression from the main plot and is contained in a frame story about Regulus' son, which is so brief and contrived that it is clearly an excuse to talk about Regulus. Marus, a former companion of Regulus, narrates the story to Regulus' son in order to encourage him. He describes Regulus as "the light of the people, in whose outstanding breast radiant Fides had taken a seat for herself and, having encircled his mind, she was holding it" (*lumen/ gentis, in egregio cuius sibi pectore sedem/ ceperat alma Fides mentemque amplexa tenebat*).⁷⁵ This foreshadowed that, although Regulus would do other great deeds, his characteristic virtue was *fides*. Marus begins with the victories of Regulus and includes a segment about Regulus killing a snake, which is compared to the Hydra or the dragon that guarded the

⁷⁴ Fest. *De Verb. Sign.* 12, Steuart 1921. Horace does mention Regulus in *Carmina* 1.12, but it is as part of a list of people and gods about whom he could sing, but does not.

⁷⁵ *Pun.* 6.130-132.

golden apples.⁷⁶ Killing such a snake makes Regulus parallel to a Greek hero or god such as Hercules. In describing Regulus' capture Marus emphasizes that it was not a Carthaginian who took Regulus, but a Spartan general.⁷⁷ The reputation of the Spartans as warriors makes his capture less shameful. Marus' account of Regulus' return to Rome highlights his Stoic qualities and the role of Fortune: he finds enduring ill-fortune more glorious than winning a battle, he would rather overcome adversity by perseverance than avoid it with precaution, his expression never changes because of circumstances, and he ignores the pleas of his wife and children.⁷⁸ This is a continuation of the Stoic interpretation of the story originating with Cicero and continuing in Seneca the Younger, which is discussed below. When Regulus begins his speech he calls upon Fides and all of the gods who witnessed his oath and then launches into a speech that is reminiscent of Horace, which explains that being a prisoner made him weak and not worth ransoming. Afterwards, he hands himself over to the Carthaginians, who take him back to Africa for torture. At the end of the tale Marus reminds Serranus that Regulus will be remembered for as long as people worship Fides.⁷⁹ Here it becomes clear that Regulus is remembered because he was willing to endure anything for the sake of *fides*. The endurance is a secondary virtue because it results from *fides*.

Cicero and Seneca the Younger represent the use of the Regulus story in philosophy. Cicero, writing the *De Officiis* during the turmoil of the late Republic, emphasized Regulus as an *exemplum fidei* in an explanation of how to deal with a

⁷⁶ *Pun.* 6.141-293. The story of the snake comes from one of the earliest versions of the story in Latin, quoted from Tubero in Gellius (*NA* 7.3), which claims that the snake is 120 ft. long. The snake is also mentioned by Valerius Maximus, who claims to be reporting a story from Livy (1.8.ext.19; *Liv. Per.* 18).

⁷⁷ *Pun.* 6.301-315.

⁷⁸ *Pun.* 6.365-414.

⁷⁹ *Pun.* 6.466-550.

situation where what was virtuous did not seem to be expedient.⁸⁰ However, he had also mentioned Regulus in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum* as a man who did not allow physical torture to overcome his virtue. Although *fides* is mentioned in this section, the emphasis is on the ability to endure torture for the sake of morals.⁸¹ Cicero commemorated the story of Regulus using different details depending on the point that he was arguing. In *De Officiis* he emphasized Regulus' speech in the senate and that *fides* was all important because it was virtuous and the virtuous was always expedient. On the contrary, in the *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, Cicero emphasizes that Regulus is still blessed because torture could not cause him to abandon his morals. In this version the endurance of torture made him more virtuous than he would have been with *fides* alone.

Seneca, writing at the time of unpredictably cruel emperors, picked up on the endurance of torture in the Regulus story almost to the exclusion of *fides*. When he mentioned Regulus it was usually among a group of Stoic exempla who were tested by fortune, but overcame misfortune because they endured rather than abandon their values. In the *De Providentia* he described Regulus as both a *documentum fidei* and a *documentum patientiae*.⁸² These commemorations reveal a shift in the meaning of Regulus' deed for the audience. *Fides* remains an important element because it provides the virtuous reason for Regulus to suffer, but the fact that he does suffer becomes more important. This shift shows that exempla were flexible and the interpretations could change depending on what was important to the audience.

Authors commemorated Regulus as an *exemplum fidei* in a variety of genres and

⁸⁰ *Off.* 3.99-111.

⁸¹ 16.

⁸² *Prov.* 3.4, 9-11; *Tranq.* 16.4; *Helv.* 12.5; *Ben.* 5.3.

for many purposes, even using the story to exemplify not only his *fides* but also his *fortitudo* in battle and in fighting a gigantic snake, his *patientia* in enduring torture, or the vagaries of *Fortuna* who either overturned him for his hubris or tested him in order to create an exemplum. His action was used to educate, to inform legal practice, to explain political decisions, to console, and to inspire imitation. The variety of uses for this story gives some idea of the importance of exempla in the Roman world. Regulus and other exempla were commemorated continually and informed practice in the daily lives of Roman citizens.

Chapter 4

Imitation: Repeating the Cycle

It is important to note that most of the authors who wrote about Regulus viewed their readers as potential imitators of Regulus. This element of telling exemplary stories is made particularly explicit by Livy in his preface:

Hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in inlustri posita monumento intueri; inde tibi tuaeque rei publicae quod imitare capias, inde foedum inceptu foedum exitu vites. Ceterum aut me amor negotii suscepti fallit, aut nulla unquam res publica nec maior nec sanctior nec bonis exemplis ditior fuit, nec in quam civitatem tam serae avaritia luxuriaque immigraverint, nec ubi tantus ac tam diu paupertati ac parsimoniae honor fuerit.

There is this, which is especially healthy and fruitful in a study of the past, that you look upon instances of each exemplum placed in a clear memorial; thence you may choose for yourself and for your republic what to imitate, thence you may shun anything loathsome in its beginning or in its end. But either love of this undertaken work deceives me or no state was ever greater or more scrupulous in religious duty or richer in good examples, nor did greed and luxury come to any other state so late, nor was there one where there was such great respect for poverty and frugality for such a long time.⁸³

Livy made it clear that he expected his readers would model their own actions on or in opposition to those of the characters that he wrote about. He also observed, as did Quintilian, that this was a particularly Roman method of learning and that it was fitting to Romans because their history provided the best exempla of all sorts.⁸⁴

As exemplarity is a cycle, this chapter will discuss both the exemplary figures whom Regulus imitated and those who imitated, or failed to imitate him. It was rare for ancient authors to make this relationship explicit, but it is possible to make connections based on figures that are named in the same lists or in the same area of a text as Regulus. Often these figures had something in common with Regulus, which caused the author to mention them in the same context. Authors who told the story of Regulus in its chronological context may not mention people in the same area because of similarities,

⁸³ 1.pr.

⁸⁴ *Inst.* 12.2.30.

but rather because they are constrained by the sequence of events, and so it is best to deal with these separately.

Ancient authors, except for those writing history or poetry, often talked about a general category of exemplary figures in a group. The actions of these men and women and the circumstances under which they were performed are not usually similar, but they can be categorized under a broad title. For instance they may all be people who suffered for the sake of virtue, but they suffered in different ways and for different virtues. In extant texts Regulus was grouped into seven such categories depending on what aspect of his deed the author wishes to illustrate: those who kept oaths, died voluntarily, valued virtue over material well-being, were blessed despite their suffering, were tested by fortune, led an honest life, or honored religion. Although Regulus was included in all of these exemplary categories, the other figures mentioned along with him vary. It is clear in each of the lists in which Regulus appears that the author thought of the exempla as a group with something in common. The people with whom Regulus was mentioned in these lists are those whom he imitated and those by whom he was imitated.

This type of reference can be further divided into general groupings where more information is given about each character and simple lists. In the larger groups, which tell the story of each character to make a moral point, the characters have more in common. Regulus was referred to in this way by Cicero, Seneca, and Valerius Maximus. In true lists the stories of the characters vary a great deal, and only the context of the passage reveals that they make a coherent group. These lists appear in Cicero and Seneca.

The category that is most relevant to Regulus as an *exemplum fidei* described those who kept or failed to keep oaths. In his *De Officiis* Cicero mentioned Regulus,

Spurius Postumius, Gaius Manicius, Quintus Pompeius, Marcus Pomponius, and the Hannibalic prisoners.⁸⁵ This group brings up an interesting aspect of exemplarity, which Livy makes explicit in the passage quoted above. There were negative exempla as well as positive, and it was possible to become a negative exemplum by failing to imitate a positive one. Most of the people in this group kept their oaths, but Quintus Pompeius and the Hannibalic prisoners failed to follow their example. Most of these stories, like that of Regulus, involve men making oaths or treaties that required them to be handed over to the enemy. The one exception is Marcus Pomponius, who kept an oath to another Roman citizen rather than an enemy. This oath was made under duress and was included to emphasize the importance of oath-keeping in the early Republic.

Both Cicero and Seneca the Younger included Regulus in groups of people who were blessed in spite of their suffering. Cicero's group in the *De Finibus* included Socrates and Zeno.⁸⁶ The inclusion of these Greek philosophers shows that Romans could imitate people from other cultures. It is interesting that Regulus is the only Roman included in this group and the only one who is not a philosopher. However, his action lends itself to a Stoic interpretation and is therefore suitable to discussions of people who are blessed because they maintain virtue in spite of suffering, which is commonplace in Stoic philosophy. In a similar group with the same theme, Seneca included Socrates and Cato the Younger with Regulus.⁸⁷ The change from Zeno to Cato makes the actions of all of the figures more similar; they all suffer by dying voluntarily as opposed to Zeno who suffered because he was poor.

⁸⁵ 3.99-115.

⁸⁶ *Fin.* 5.82-83.

⁸⁷ *Ep.* 8.71.17.

Regulus was discussed by Valerius Maximus in a section of his *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia* that dealt with people who honored religion. This section included M. Marcellus, Q. Metellus, Ti. Gracchus, P. Licinius, L. Furius Bibaculus, L. Albanius, Q. Petilius, Tarquinius Superbus, the senate, and a long list of people who abdicated office for religious reasons.⁸⁸ The Romans prided themselves on religious duty and so it makes sense that the figures mentioned are many and varied. It emphasizes both that many Romans have already performed exemplary actions for the sake of religion and that they are an important category of people to imitate. The fact that Valerius Maximus decided to include Regulus in this list is evidence that oaths were considered sacred.

Cicero had Cato the Elder list exemplary figures who died voluntarily in the *De Senectute* to show that death was not to be feared. The list included L. Brutus, the Decii, Regulus, the Scipios, L. Paulus, and M. Marcellus.⁸⁹ Each of these people died for a different reason and under different circumstances. Some of them died in battle and others after having been taken prisoner, but they all faced death voluntarily for the sake of a greater good and in this respect they imitate each other. The list begins in chronological order, but deviates when it places L. Paulus and M. Marcellus after the Scipios. This order shows that it does not matter who is imitating whom, but they act as a group of people who are all remarkable for the same sort of action, which should be emulated by Cato's companions.

A much shorter list by Cicero in the *De Finibus* named those who valued virtue over worldly happiness. These were Lucretia, Regulus, and L. Verginius. These figures

⁸⁸ 1.1.

⁸⁹ 20.

provide an example of how different the people included in a list could be.⁹⁰ Lucretia took her life for the sake of her own chastity, Regulus went knowingly to his death for the sake of good faith, and L. Verginius killed his daughter for the sake of her chastity. Therefore each of them performed a different action, and in the case of Regulus it was because of a different virtue. These, however, belong together and are a group to imitate because they are extreme examples of giving up worldly happiness to maintain virtue.

Seneca mentioned Regulus again in a list of people whom Fortune tested in different ways to see if they would remain virtuous; Mucius, Fabricius, Rutilius, Socrates, and Cato (Mucius, Fabricius, and Rutilius are added to the list used by Seneca in the *Epistulae*).⁹¹ Seneca demonstrated that Fortune tests many people in different ways by mentioning an exemplum of each of her torments. He also revealed that they can triumph over Fortune by remaining virtuous under any circumstances. The concept that the greatest good was to remain virtuous regardless of the circumstances was Stoic and Seneca used these same figures except for Fabricius to illustrate this point again in the *Epistulae Morales*.⁹² This reinforces the theory that he thinks of these men as a group to be imitated with respect to their Stoic behavior. Most of the same figures are referred to again by Seneca in a list of men who led an honest life. This time he leaves out both Mucius and Fabricius.⁹³ Therefore living an honest life according to Seneca must be similar to preserving virtue in the face of adversity.

In sources that mentioned Regulus not as part of a category of exemplary figures but either on his own or chronologically the process for determining imitators was

⁹⁰ 2.65.

⁹¹ *Prov.* 3.4.

⁹² 16.98.12.

⁹³ *Ep.* 7.67.7.

different. For instance, in the summary of Livy there were no clear imitators, though there may have been in the original, of Regulus' action, but his audience is full of potential imitators. This lack of clear imitators is true for the Latin historians in general. Speeches, poetry, and even some sections of philosophy imply imitation in various ways.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Cicero's first recorded use of Regulus as an exemplum results from a direct comparison between Cicero and Regulus. While describing Clodius' underhanded way of manipulating crowds, Cicero said, "You even mention to me Marcus Atilius Regulus, the very guy who preferred to return voluntarily to Carthage for torture rather than to stay at Rome without those captives about whom he had been sent to the senate, and you deny that I should desire a return through trained slaves and armed men" (*tu mihi etiam M. Atilium Regulum commemoras, qui redire ipse Carthaginem sua voluntate ad supplicium quam sine iis captivis de quibus ad senatum missus erat Romae manere maluerit, et mihi negas optandum redditum fuisse per familias comparatas et homines armatos*).⁹⁴ This implied that Clodius made a direct comparison between Cicero and Regulus. Considering the reference to a return through slaves and armed men, it is likely that Clodius blamed Cicero for failing to imitate Regulus and that it was related to Cicero's return from exile. Perhaps Clodius suggested that Cicero should have followed Regulus' example in realizing that his country did not need him.

Horace made a more indirect comparison between Regulus and Augustus in *Carmen 3.5*. He made a direct comparison between the soldiers who have become prisoners and those who were prisoners along with Regulus. The adjective *provida* describes the mind of Regulus in the poem, because Regulus realized that soldiers who

⁹⁴ 127.

have been prisoners are weak and should not be ransomed. The use of this adjective suggests that he was correct in his assessment of the situation. Augustus imitated the foresight of Regulus by deciding not to ransom the Roman soldiers at Parthia when he regained the standards. This is, at least on a literal level, a favorable comparison because they both realize that leaving the soldiers as captives is best for the Roman state.

An entirely different approach from all of the above was taken by Silius Italicus, who included Regulus' son Serranus in the story as an imitator of his father's virtue. Serranus has just been in a losing battle and is wounded. Regulus' old companion Marus encourages Serranus to endure patiently by telling him the story of Regulus' valor and of his resolve in facing torture. He expects that Serranus will imitate his father in the coming war.⁹⁵ The relationship between a father and son was important in Rome. As Cicero revealed in the *De Officiis*, which he dedicated to his own son, sons were especially encouraged to imitate their fathers or other famous ancestors. He notes, “Those whose fathers or ancestors attained some glory, these are mostly eager to excel in the same field of honor, like Quintus Mucius, the son of Publius, in law and Africanus, the son of Paulus, in the army” (*Quorum vero patres aut maiores aliqua gloria praestiterunt, ii student plerumque eodem in genere laudis excellere, ut Q. Mucius P. f. in iure civili, Pauli filius Africanus in re militari*). Therefore it was suitable to cast Serranus as the imitator of Regulus.

However, the military career of Serranus is anticlimactic. Silius Italicus introduced him for the first time leaving the disastrous battle at Lake Trasimene. He mentioned that Serranus was the last of his companions left alive and that he was

⁹⁵ *Pun.* 6.62-555.

wounded, but does not directly praise his valor. Once Serranus arrives at the house of Marus, he complains that he sought death on the battle field, but he is chided for his lamentations by Marus. Unlike his father, Serranus is not an exemplum of Stoic *patientia*. After Marus reminds him about the story of Regulus while tending to his wounds, he leads him back to his mother Marcia and Serranus disappears from the story.⁹⁶ In this case the Roman exemplary cycle failed, because Serranus attempted to live up to the high standard set by his father but was unable to do so.

This failure of Serranus may be an imperial commentary on the degenerating state of mankind. They have the will to follow their great ancestors, but not the ability. When Marus returns Serranus to his mother, Marcia, she says, “Alas, my son, how often was I begging that you should not bear your paternal wrath and passions into battle and that sad honor should not urge you to wage war in the arms of your father” (*quotiens heu, nate, petebam,/ ne patrias iras animosque in proelia ferres/ neu te belligeri stimularet in arma parentis/ triste decus*).⁹⁷ She suggests that Serranus, although he goes to war out of a sense of honor, does not have the martial capability that his father once had. She deprives him even of personal volition by saying that he takes not his own but his paternal wrath and passions into battle. Exemplary education has worked on Serranus in so far as it has driven him to attempt an imitation of his father, but he lacks the outstanding qualities that made Regulus an exemplum.

Thus imitation brings the exemplary cycle to its completion, or in better circumstances begins the cycle anew. The story of Regulus is frequently memorialized at Rome to inspire others with the promise of fame. The lists of heroes reveal that these

⁹⁶ *Pun.* 6.41-589.

⁹⁷ *Pun.* 6.584-587.

heroes imitate each other in virtue even if they do not perform the same actions. There are also those who fail to follow a positive exemplum and become negative exempla. These act as a warning to those who find themselves in a similar situation that if they do not act in accordance with the standard they will be rewarded with eternal ignominy. Regulus set the standard for *fides* and successfully inspired imitation in this and other important categories of Roman virtue.

Conclusion

Regulus was important to a Roman audience as an *exemplum fidei*. Each aspect of the exemplary cycle reveals different nuances to the importance of his story. In accordance with fetial law his action maintains a positive relationship between the Romans and the gods. Three audiences judge his action; the good audiences, the senate and the gods, judge it favorably and the Romans describe the Carthaginians as so wicked that it is in Regulus' favor that they do not approve of his oath. The action is commemorated many times with varying emphases so that the story remains relevant for Roman audiences from the Republic to the Empire. Some Romans do imitate Regulus in oath-keeping or at least in valuing religious duties above all other things. This shows that the Roman exemplary cycle can perpetuate itself by inspiring a new generation of Romans.

Regulus continued to be an exemplum for the early Church Fathers. Picking up on Cicero and Seneca's use of Regulus as an *exemplum patientiae*, many of them spoke of Regulus as a proto-martyr, although some questioned his motives. They spoke of Regulus as a great man who was to be pitied because he worshipped gods that did not exist. If the gods that he swore by were not real, then his *fides* is impressive, but hollow. Therefore the Church Fathers urged people to imitate Regulus in his willingness to endure torture for the sake of piety, but also to realize that they have better reason to become martyrs because their god is real.

Tertullian included him twice in lists of pagans who faced torture willingly, which he used to encourage Christians to face torture, because if the pagans were willing to be tortured for the sake of human praise, then the Christians should be even more willing to

do so for divine glory.⁹⁸ In his *Apologetica* he argued that pagans should respect Christians for their willingness to suffer as they respect exempla like Regulus.⁹⁹

Lactantius took the story of Regulus and changed it so that Regulus would seem even less impressive compared to Christian martyrs. He claimed that Regulus only gave himself up to the enemy because he was ashamed to live as a captive.¹⁰⁰ This is clearly not the story given in earlier sources where Regulus would be free if there were an exchange of prisoners. Perhaps Lactantius was picking up on Cicero's perplexing use of the adjective *captivus* to describe Regulus in the *De Officiis*.¹⁰¹ In this passage Cicero is speaking hypothetically about Regulus remaining at home.

In a segment of the *Epistulae Variae*, Ambrose had Rome personified make a speech about the great men of the past, the degenerate emperors, and her welcome of Christianity. In the first part of the speech Rome mentions Regulus as one of the men who made her great.¹⁰² As only he and two other pagan exempla are mentioned, it is clear that he is one of the best known exempla among Christians.

Augustine admired Regulus for his willingness to undergo torture, but used the story to show similarities between pagan religion and Christianity. In the *De Civitate Dei* Augustine pointed out that Regulus was not forced to return, but went of his own volition because of his oath. The emphasis that he places on the oath returns the focus to Regulus as an *exemplum fidei*. His respect for Regulus is clear, calling him the “noblest exemplum” (*nobilissimum exemplum*). He pointed out that Regulus could not be keeping

⁹⁸ *Ad nat.* 1.18.3, *Ad mart.* 4.

⁹⁹ 50.1-9.

¹⁰⁰ *Div. Inst.* 5.13.

¹⁰¹ 3.100.

¹⁰² 834.

his religious duty in return for happiness in this life, since Regulus knows that he will be tortured, and so he must believe that the gods will bless him in an afterlife, which is like Christianity.¹⁰³ In this argument Augustine failed to take into account the Roman desire for glory among the living after they are dead and also that Regulus may keep his oath for the good of the state without any hope of an afterlife.

These Church Fathers acted as a secondary audience and reinterpreted the story of Regulus to fit their worldview, just as other audiences had done since the Republic. The fact that these stories are easy to adapt with changing circumstances to inspire new groups of people is integral to exemplary discourse. Different cultures readily manipulated them to suit their own purposes. Roman exempla changed from the Republic to the Empire and allowed the Romans to create a sense of continuity. Exemplary education created a sense that these actions had been repeated in the past and would continue to be imitated in the future.

¹⁰³ 1.15.

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