

The Status of Rome in Republican Discourse
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Among the attacks Octavian made against Antony in the waning months of the Triumvirate was the charge that Antony planned to move the capital of the empire from Rome to Alexandria. In historical context, these allegations appear ludicrous: Antony could have had little cause to desire a transfer of Roman power from Italy to the East. Yet the charge was a potent one; similar claims had been made against Caesar to justify his assassination, and the troubling issue of Rome's position within her own dominion appears also in Livy's narratives of the debate over the colonization of Veii (5.24-30, 50-55) and of the Latin war and outbreak of the second Samnite war (8.3-23). In a period when Rome enjoyed unquestioned dominance in the Mediterranean, it is perhaps surprising that stories about rival centers of power resonated so strongly with the Roman people. Roman fears for their native city, however, were not new in this period, and the prominence of the theme in the political and historical discourse of the late Republic and early Empire is symptomatic of a more deeply held Roman fear that another power may at some time eclipse their own. This concern, which has its origins in the trauma of the Social War, finds full expression in Cicero's speeches against the Rullan agrarian bill.

Scholarly discussion of alternate Romes, notably Ceaușescu ("*Altera Roma*," *Historia* 25 (1976)) and Miles ("Cycle of Roman History..." *AJP* 107 (1986)), has largely bypassed the significance of Cicero's discussion of Capua, focusing instead on the period after Caesar gained complete dominance and referring only briefly to republican antecedents. The Rullan speeches, however, are important evidence for the feelings of the Roman people and for how those feelings were brought to bear on political and intellectual life through the Republican and Augustan periods. In his first speech to the people, Cicero threatens his audience with the possibility of losing the Campanian revenues which had supported them during the Social War (*leg. agr.* II.80-83) and the establishment of a city to rival Rome in Capua (*leg. agr.* II.89-97). At one stroke, the division of Campania and colonization of Capua would deprive Rome of her greatest material security and elevate another Italian city to a position to make a challenge to Rome possible. Though Capua and Campania had largely remained loyal during the Social War, Capua had a history of conflict with Rome, and Cicero's line of attack in the agrarian speeches shows that her rebirth as a center of power in the world of the late Republic was a matter of public concern.

The Social War had forced Rome to reevaluate concepts of citizenship and to share power with her allies, but it also had lasting psychological effects as the Romans struggled to make necessary concessions without losing a grip on their privilege and power. The allies' establishment of Corfinium – now Italica – as a new capital for Italy had shaken the Romans' confidence in the preeminence of their own city as a seat of power, and the difficulty of putting down the rebellion had emphasized the dangers of allowing Rome's neighbors to gain strength. These lessons, with the other scars of the turbulent years from 92-82, would inform both the public consciousness and public decision-making in the following decades. An examination of Cicero's rhetorical presentation of the decemvirs' plans for Capua in that year reveals the process by which Roman social memory shaped elite discourse and political life in the last decades of the Republic. It was ultimately the people's own memory that made Cicero's and Octavian's public attacks on potential founders of rival cities so effective, and it was the public debate over this memory that provided Livy with the material for his interpretation of the distant Roman past.