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**The Roman Festival of the Lupercalia:
History, Myth, Ritual and Its Indo-European Heritage**
D.Phil. thesis in Classical Languages and Literature

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Abstract

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The Roman festival of the Lupercalia is one of the most discussed issues in the field of pre-Christian Roman religion. Hardly a year goes by without an article on the subject appearing in a major Classics journal. But the festival presents a range of issues that individual articles cannot address. This thesis is an attempt to present a modern analysis of the phenomenon of the Lupercalia as a whole, including literary, archaeological and historical evidence on the subject.

The first section presents the ancient sources on the Lupercalia, and is divided into five chapters, each analysing a particular aspect of the festival: fertility, purification, the importance of the wolf and the foundation myth, the mythology of Arcadian origins, and Caesar's involvement with the Lupercalia of 44 BC. The second section places the Lupercalia in a wider context, discussing the festival's topography and the course of the running Luperci, its relationship to other lustration rituals, and its position in the Roman calendar, ending with an appraisal of the changes it underwent in late Antiquity. The third section employs methods from linguistics, anthropology and comparative religion to show that the Lupercalia involved a ritual of initiation, which was also reflected in the Roman foundation myth. The central chapter of this section discusses the methodology used in comparative Indo-European mythology, and offers a case study that parallels the god of the festival (Faunus) with Rudra of Vedic Hinduism. The last chapter considers other parallels with Indian religion, especially the relationship between *flamen* and *brahmin*. The thesis challenges a number of established theories on the subject and offers new evidence to show that the festival has Indo-European origins, but also that it played an important role throughout Roman history.

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Abbreviations

The abbreviations for ancient Greek and Latin sources generally follow the format of the OLD and LSJ, with the exception of Ovid's *Fasti* and Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Roman Antiquities* (which is implied in 'Dion. Hal.'). Abbreviations for works not mentioned in the OLD and LSJ are supplied with those from OCD and all the rest are listed here.

- > yields (by linguistic derivation)
- AB *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*
- AŚS *Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra*
- AV *Atharva Veda*
- Av Avestan
- BŚS *Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra*
- CGR *Corpus Grammaticorum Latinorum*
- CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinorum*
- DAI *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut*
- DŚS *Drāhyāyana Śrauta Sūtra*
- ER Eliade, M. (ed., 1987) *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (London, New York)
- F. Ovid's *Fasti* (Teubner, 1978)
- FGRH F. Jacoby (ed.) *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker*
- FRHist T.J. Cornell et al. (eds.) *The Fragments of the Roman Historians*
- Gel. Pope Gelasius' letter 'Against Anromachus', as reproduced in G. Pomarés (1959) *Lettre contre les Lupercales et dix-huit messes du Sacramentaire léonien* (Paris)
- Gell. Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*
- Gk Greek
- IE Indo-European
- JB *Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa*
- KB *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*
- L. Latin
- LSJ Liddell and Scott: Greek-English Lexicon
- LŚS *Lātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra*
- LTUR *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*

MBh	<i>Mahābhārata</i>
Nar.	Conon, <i>Narrationes</i> (Διήγησις)
OCD	Oxford Classical Dictionary
OCS	Old Church Slavonic
OE	Old English
OGR	<i>Origo Gentis Romanae</i>
OHG	Old High German
OIr	Old Irish
OLD	Oxford Latin Dictionary
ON	Old Norse
PB	<i>Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa</i>
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
RE	<i>Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
RG	<i>Res Gestae Divi Augusti</i>
RV	<i>Rig Veda</i>
ŚA	<i>Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka</i>
ŚB	<i>Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa</i>
Sk	Sanskrit
ŚŚS	<i>Śāṅkhāyana-Śrautasūtra</i>
TLL	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i>
Toch	Tocharian
TS	<i>Taittiriya Saṃhitā</i>
VS	<i>Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā</i>
YV	<i>Yajur Veda</i>

Preface

The festival of the Lupercalia is one of the most hotly debated issues in Roman religion. It has attracted an increasing number of articles in recent times: almost every year sees at least one new piece on the subject. The problem is further complicated by the fact that almost anyone writing on the foundation myth of Rome (Romulus and Remus) needs to address the Lupercalia in some way, as the mythology of the festival is closely related to the youth of the twins. The festival is thus central to our understanding of Roman mythology and religion.

However, the multiplicity of perspectives produces a variety of outcomes, as they address particular aspects rather than the festival as a whole, which is not surprising given that its long duration and sheer complexity can hardly be encapsulated in an article format. Only a few scholars have ever attempted to approach the totality of the subject. Franklin's thesis made an attempt to connect the Lupercalia with the then fashionable Mediterranean mother goddess.¹ This quickly became outdated, but it took another half a century before Holleman² wrote his doctoral thesis on pope Gelasius' letter against Andromachus, by then a largely neglected source, which he used as a prop for speculation. More than thirty years ago, Ulf³ combined both traditional philological and modern anthropological methods to give a painstaking analysis of the rituals, which provided a new model for understanding the festival, but neglected its mythology.

It is my intention to produce a modern study that will address the Lupercalia as a whole, starting from the multiplicity of interpretations that the ancient sources ascribe to it through its role in Roman history, space, and the calendar down to its distant Indo-European origins. The Lupercalia is one of the most long-lasting Roman

¹ Franklin 1921.

² Holleman 1974.

³ Ulf 1982.

festivals. The aforementioned account of Gelasius comes from the late 5th century and shows that the festival survived the Theodosian prohibitions by more than a hundred years. As I will argue in section three, close Indian parallels present good reasons to think its roots go back to Indo-European times, as far as the third millennium BC. It is little wonder that no one has undertaken a study encompassing all the issues that such a complex subject requires.

The first section of this thesis offers a detailed analysis of the ancient sources, which refer to the Lupercalia in many different ways. I believe that contextualising the sources is essential to understanding their interpretation of the festival. The whole of the first section is then a sort of introduction to the subject, which takes us back to the ancients and their perspectives, and only then critiques their use in modern scholarship. Dividing the section into chapters on particular aspects (fertility, purification, etc.) provides a way to facilitate discussion of such rich and varied source material.

Section two places the Lupercalia in the context of Roman space and time, starting from the topography of the festival, and then detailing its place within Roman religion and its calendar. Section three will undoubtedly present the most controversial approach, seeking to use methods from linguistics, anthropology and Indo-European studies in order to see how comparative religion and mythology can be used to further illuminate the festival.

Introduction

Having briefly set out the rationale for a thesis on the festival of the Lupercalia in the preface, I shall here present the structure of the work and some of the key points of my argument. The first section presents a detailed overview of the sources (divided into five chapters), and seeks to disprove or reinforce the most influential modern theories on particular aspects of the festival. The section brings a disparate array of sources into one place, offers a few original insights, gives a useful overview of the main themes, and flags up many interesting points for further discussion in later chapters. Each chapter focuses on thematic aspects of the festival: fertility and purification are straightforward themes already present in the ancient sources, while chapters entitled ‘Wolf, Cattle Raids and the Foundation Myth’ and ‘Evander and Arcadian Origins’ follow a more arbitrary categorisation, which I have chosen in order to focus on the rich mythology of the festival, connected to its putative origins, either Indo-European or Arcadian. The final chapter analyses the historical episode of Caesar’s crowning at the Lupercalia of 44 BC, and shows how significant and vigorous the festival was at the time of the late Republic.

Section two is an attempt to contextualise the Lupercalia in Roman space and time: the first chapter is entirely devoted to a detailed discussion of topography, and as a result of original research in Rome it provides a fresh interpretation of the issue, with suggestions for the location of the Lupercal cave and further research. Chapter 2.2 considers the Lupercalia in relation to other lustration rituals in order to argue that ‘lustration’ was not a meaningless category, but a term consistent with the features of the festival and its position in Roman religion. Chapter 2.3 compares the Lupercalia with other festivals and rituals in order to position it in the transitional period of the year, and applies the concepts of liminality and ‘ritual of reversal’ to explain both its unique nature and the changes it underwent in the long centuries of the Empire. The anthropological component opens up the discussion to a wider

interdisciplinary approach and shows how another discipline may provide fruitful solutions to problems that have so far been discussed mostly in the framework of traditional classical scholarship.

The anthropological concept of liminality points to typological similarities that are shared across human cultures (e.g. Carnival is a liminal festival)¹ as opposed to genealogical similarities that need to be specific and strong enough to indicate a genetic link, i.e. common Indo-European heritage.² The gist of my argument in chapter 3.1 is of a typological nature as it uses a wide range of existing (mostly anthropological) scholarship to show that the Lupercalia should be understood as a ritual of initiation, a model that also applies to the Roman foundation myth. The motif of wolf as predator is of central importance in this discussion as it provides a heuristic model to explain not just the name of the festival, but a whole series of its ritual and mythical aspects, such as cattle raids, its mode of sacrifice, and ritual nudity of its priests. But the evidence for warband initiatory groups modelled on wolf predation is not restricted to the Indo-European world and this requires more specific evidence to argue for a genetic comparison. This is set out in detail in chapter 3.2 with an examination of comparative methodologies and a case study comparing Roman Faunus and Vedic Rudra who share such a number of specific similarities that a common origin in Indo-European prehistory seems the most plausible explanation. This constitutes my most original contribution to scholarship on the Lupercalia, as it challenges existing theories and proposes a new understanding of the festival through its god. The Indo-European connections that arise with this conclusion are then further explored (in chapter 3.3) through a set of contrastive parallels between the Luperci and *flamen Dialis*, which find strong Indian comparanda, and should give pause to those who decry any possibility of a

¹ Victor Turner (1977) developed the concept inspired by an African people he studied, but he already sought to apply it to other (including Western) cultures.

² See M.L. West 2007: 19-24.

comparative approach to Roman mythology and religion. The category of the dog as an impure animal may be a typological widespread trait of world religions, but having as many as ten different matching traits related to specific taboos on both sides (oath, army, horse, funeral, alcohol, raw meat, oil, nudity, homicide) can hardly indicate anything but a genetic link between the Indian and the Roman priest.

The subject of the thesis is such that it relies on a wide variety of sources including both ancient history and Roman literature. Plutarch, Ovid, Livy and Servius are used along with archaeological evidence to argue for a specific interpretation of the Lupercalia. If all the sources agree on a larger issue (for example the aspect of fertility), there is reason to think they should be considered together, but this often requires a discussion about the nature of an individual source, its historical context and presumed intentions. As much as the first section frequently exposes the overstatements of modern scholars as based on a casual reading or insufficient ancient evidence, the same process leaves me liable to similar accusations when I attempt theories of my own in sections two and three. This greatly depends on how one understands the ancient sources and the evidence they present. Frequently, a single source may contain precious information not found elsewhere, but which perfectly fits the comparanda in other Indo-European traditions. For example, the aforementioned prohibitions of *flamen Dialis* are most extensively preserved only in Aulus Gellius, but they find close Indian parallels in the taboos of the *brahmin*. In such a case, one has no choice but to conclude that Gellius is faithful to his word when he says he is citing a lost Republican work of a certain Fabius Pictor³ on sacral law.

This argument may seem more difficult to maintain when it comes to literary evidence where we are accustomed to creativity and inventiveness in the myths of

³ Gell. 10.15.1. Not the famous first Roman historian (Quintus Fabius Pictor), but probably a second-century BC author of an unknown *praenomen*. See *RE* s.v. 'Ser (?) Fabius Pictor'.

ancient poets. A particularly striking case is that of Ovid's *Fasti*, a source which I will use throughout the thesis, but which is as much a result of the poet's engagement with Hellenistic literary tradition as it is with Roman Republican traditions and their respective myths. But in my view the two aspects do not exclude each other: Ovid is free to rework the materials he inherits,⁴ whether they come from his Greek predecessors or a Republican religious traditions, but he rarely changes them beyond recognition. We may take as an example the famous passage from book one of the *Metamorphoses* where the traditional Hesiodic myth of metallic ages is rounded off by the story of Lycaon and the world flood.⁵ Ovid's ingenious twist was to compare Jupiter's Olympian palace with Augustus' Palatine, implying that Jupiter's hysteria over human corruption can be compared to Augustus' stifling moral legislation. However, the succession of ages, the flood myth and the characters of Lycaon and Jupiter are not Ovid's inventions,⁶ and I argue the same should hold in cases where one suspects Indo-European heritage.

Within the *Fasti* themselves, we notice a range of different literary influences, and such a passage as the description of Venus at the beginning of book four (where he uses both Lucretius and Varro)⁷ give credence to Ovid's opening statement on expounding rituals dug up from ancient annals (*sacra... annalibus eruta priscis*)⁸ as more than simply a didactic figure of literary learning. We shall see that Ovid is also validated as a diligent student of Republican lore and its priestly books when it comes to his evidence for the presence of the *flamen Dialis* at the Lupercalia and the competitive cattle raid between Romulus and Remus (which the poet himself professes to be a native Roman myth). Although in both cases we have no clear Greek or Roman evidence to corroborate Ovid's, I shall bring out salient Indo-

⁴ Knox (1986: 1-2) encapsulates his study of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the opening statement: '...and yet perhaps no other Roman poet so consistently reveals himself a product of his literary background.' For Ovidian intertextuality see Casali 2009: 341-54 (with references).

⁵ 1.151-80.

⁶ For discussion and references see Barchiesi 2005: 166-84.

⁷ See C.M.C. Green 2002: 71-99.

⁸ *F.* 1.7.

European comparanda that suggest the notion that Ovid was reworking inherited material is more plausible than simply saying he invented it (and so dismiss the myth out of hand).

The sceptical reader will no doubt wonder how can one be certain that some of Ovid's information derives from the same Indo-European tradition as the Vedas of India. Of course, certainty is not guaranteed, but the criteria used are similar to studies of intertextuality in so far as comparison reveals a level of similarity which seems to go beyond accidental. The methodology employed in such cases may draw both on precise linguistic criteria (terms and formulae that share a common origin) as well as looser arguments on phrasing and mythical structure. A full outline of these methods would be impossible to fit within the space of an introduction: it is reserved for chapter 3.2, where a detailed discussion can be reinforced with salient examples. Here I will say that my approach follows more recent trends in comparative mythology, particularly the works of Martin West, Roger Woodard and Calvert Watkins.⁹ It is interesting to note that Watkins, as one of the most influential figures of recent Indo-European comparativism, once called it 'genetic intertextuality' with clear reference to the similarities between his method and traditional literary studies.¹⁰ He also warned that his linguistic evidence for the use of inherited Indo-European formulae in the works of Pindar in no way detracts from seeing Pindar as 'a historical personage' of his own time.¹¹ I may say the same about Ovid: proposing that the poet used inherited Indo-European material can only 'increase our awe before his genius' as we come to understand that he was tapping into a tradition going back thousands of years.

⁹ West 2007, Woodard 2006, 2013, Watkins 1995. I will explain my indebtedness to Dumézil and relationship to Dumézilians in section 3.2.2.

¹⁰ Watkins 1995: 10.

¹¹ Watkins 1995: 11, see full discussion 3-11.

The reason why Indo-European ‘genetic intertextuality’ is more difficult to conceive than traditional intertextuality is not only the unpopularity of the former in mainstream classical studies,¹² but also the fact that Greek sources on which a poet like Ovid is drawing are more readily available than Roman Republican traditions. Cases like the aforementioned Venus parallel in the *Fasti* are rare as we only have fragments of Varro’s *magnum opus*, and earlier authors like Cato or Naevius may seem even further out of reach. However, what is preserved of these earlier authors does warrant the conclusion that Augustan poets used them,¹³ and frequently very late ancient authors cite Republican authorities to support their claims. For example, Macrobius had access to earlier sources through intermediaries like Aulus Gellius, who was a great scholar of Republican lore.¹⁴ Ultimately, the use of sources like Servius or Macrobius in arguing for a genetic Indo-European comparison is not essentially different from using earlier authors. The contexts and historical circumstances are different, but we should allow for the possibility that any of the sources could have preserved specific details (pertaining to Republican rituals) that may be relevant and comparable to other Indo-European traditions.

As I have briefly explained the position of my comparative approach in relation to classical literary studies, it is only right that I should try the same in relation to ancient history. This thesis is dedicated to a festival closely linked to the Roman foundation myth, which has been the subject of an extensive historical enquiry. One name particularly stands out in recent decades: T.P. Wiseman, a historian whose work I shall repeatedly have occasion to address in the following pages. Wiseman’s famous method is usually to assume that a Roman myth should be a reflection of a current (or recent) political reality. The most controversial example

¹² For the influence of tradition on this issue and some of the political implications of comparativism in Classics and Philology see Vuković 2014: 145-7.

¹³ A typical example is Virgil’s engagement with Ennius for which see Goldschmidt’s (2013) recent study.

¹⁴ See *FRHist* 1.69-73. 89-90 (with references).

is the myth of Romulus and Remus, which Wiseman interprets as a mythical reflection of the struggle between patricians and plebeians in the 4th century BC.¹⁵ This hypothesis has been rightly criticised for several reasons, not least because of Wiseman's stress on the absence of the traditional story from earlier Greek sources that refer to Rome. It does not necessarily follow that the story did not exist before we find its full elaboration in the 3rd century BC as Greek authors had their own agenda, and only a partial knowledge of Rome.¹⁶ From a comparative point of view, Meurant has demonstrated that the motif of twinship is an extremely widespread (if not a universal) mythical trope,¹⁷ which questions Wiseman's interpretation of a twin as a novelty that needs to be explained (with reference to political struggles).

One can easily subscribe to the notion that myths are exploited for political and social purposes: for example, we shall see how Caesar employed the foundation myth and the Lupercalia mythology to promote his political ends (in chapter 1.5). However, it does not thereby follow that the myths were wholly invented to serve that very purpose. The comparative approach that I advocate always considers the possibility that myths may survive in the *longue durée* and that political or other modifications may be added to an existing structure. For example, in a recent study of the Nonae Caprotinae, Woodard argues that the mythology of the festival can be traced back to an Indo-European origin:¹⁸ the Roman army is first put to flight by a superior enemy, which it then returns to conquer with the help of feminine seduction. We find this ancient mythical narrative variously applied to Roman wars with Latini, Volsci and Gauls. These versions represent synchronic instances where the myth was adapted to political circumstances, but neither of which produced the older mythical motif that Woodard diachronically traces to an Indo-European tradition.

¹⁵ Wiseman 1995b.

¹⁶ As Purcell put it: '...whether or not they tell the Romulus and Remus story, in whole or in part, straight or garbled, must be wholly unconnected with the question of whether it was told at Rome or in Italy at the time that each author wrote.' See the whole devastating critique of Purcell (1997).

¹⁷ Meurant 2000.

¹⁸ Woodard 2013: 2-9.

Woodard's study provides another interesting conclusion relevant to my project's contribution to the study of ancient history and religion. Considering a number of Roman myths, he argues that a large majority of Indo-European inherited material is preserved in the context of rituals and religious festivals.¹⁹ My hypotheses on Luperci as an initiation group, the origin of Faunus, and the close parallels between *flamen Dialis* and the *brahmin* rest on the connection of these ancient models to the festival of the Lupercalia. This should also bear some implications for the study of Roman memory, which has recently become a very popular field of research.²⁰ Despite the great interest scholars have taken in the subject, the contribution of Indo-European inherited material has so far been neglected. This thesis hopes to contribute to memory studies by providing substantial evidence for Woodard's claim on the continuity of Roman mythology. The fact that priests and religious specialists can maintain sacred lore through millennia of transmission is now well established, and I hope to show how the Roman Luperci and *flamen Dialis* had precisely such a function in Roman cultural memory. It is for the reader to decide whether or not the attempt is successful.

¹⁹ Woodard 2013: 118.

²⁰ Larmour and Spencer 2007; Rodriguez-Mayorgas 2007; Galinski 2014.

Section 1: Sources and Aspects of the Festival

1.1 Fertility

This thesis section presents the ancient sources on the Lupercalia. In the literary tradition, the Lupercalia is better attested than most other Roman festivals. To facilitate the discussion, I have divided the section into chapters, each dealing with a particular aspect of the festival. The citations of the most important sources are given extensively and with translations so that the reader may see the material in question and make his/her own conclusions. The aim is to contextualise the sources, many of which are wrapped in great complexity. This takes precedence over a discussion of secondary bibliography, which often makes grand claims that disregard the subtlety of the materials at our disposal.

One of the most conspicuous and important aspects of the Lupercalia is its apparent significance as a ritual of fertility. In the public celebration of the festival, one saw naked¹ young men run around the Palatine, and striking passers-by, especially women, with goatskin thongs. We start from one of the most important sources on Roman religion, Ovid's *Fasti*, where he gives a unique poetic account of the festival's origin. After introducing the Lupercalia as a festival of Faunus, he presents several aetiologies to explain its origin.² This version supposes that Romulus was its founder, as opposed to the alternative myth, which reports it to be Evander.³ The beginning of this passage is straightforward, as Ovid addresses the bride and advises her to readily accept the blows of a fruitful hand (*fecundae dextrae*), that of the Lupercus. This encouraging introduction is followed by a full account of the

¹ On the nudity of the Luperci see p. 158-9 below.

² For another aetiology with Romulus see p. 53-5.

³ On Evander and Greek aetiologies see chapter 1.4.

aetiological myth (very different in style to his other *aetia*), which presents us with several issues (as we shall presently see). The passage is quoted in full:⁴

Nupta, quid exspectas? Non tu pollutibus herbis
nec prece nec magico carmine mater eris:
excipe fecundae patienter verbera dextrae,
iam socer optatum nomen habebit avi.
Nam fuit illa dies, dura cum sorte maritae
reddebant uteri pignora rara sui.
'Quid mihi' clamabat 'prodest rapuisse Sabinas?'
Romulus (hoc illo sceptrum tenente fuit)
'Si mea non vires, sed bellum iniuria fecit?
Utilius fuerat non habuisse nurus.'

Monte sub Esquilio multis incaeduus annis
Iunonis magnae nomine lucus erat.
Huc ubi venerunt, pariter nuptaeque virique
suppliciter posito procubuere genu,
cum subito motae tremuere cacumina silvae
et dea per lucos mira locuta suos:
'Italidas matres' inquit 'sacer hircus inito'.
Obstipuit dubio territa turba sono.
Augur erat, nomen longis intercidit annis,
nuper ab Etrusca venerat exul humo;
ille caprum mactat: iussae sua terga puellae
pellibus exsectis percutienda dabant.
Luna resumebat decimo nova cornua motu,
virque pater subito nuptaque mater erat.
Gratia Lucinae: Dedit haec tibi nomina lucus,
aut quia principium tu, dea, lucis habes.
Parce, precor, gravidis, facilis Lucina, puellis,
maturumque utero molliter aufer onus!

Bride, what are you waiting for? You will not become a mother using potent herbs, or by prayer or by spell. Patiently receive the blows of a fruitful hand and soon your father-in-law will bear the desired name of grandfather. For, there was a time of hard fate when married women rarely produced the pledge of their wombs. Romulus said (as he ruled at the time): 'What was the use of stealing the Sabine women, if my crime brought only war and not strength? It would have been more useful not having brides at all'. Beneath the Esquiline hill there was a grove in the name of great Juno, untouched through long years. When they came here, both brides and their husbands knelt in supplication, and suddenly the tops of the trees shook and trembled and the goddess spoke these strange words throughout her grove: 'Let a sacred he-goat enter Italian women!' The frightened crowd stood motionless at the equivocal sound. There was an augur (his name is lost through long years),

⁴ Ov. *F.* 2.425-52.

who had recently come from Etruria seeking asylum; he sacrificed a he-goat. As ordered, the girls gave their backs to be struck by the goatskin thongs. When the moon was growing new horns in its tenth circuit, the husband was suddenly a father and the bride a mother. Thanks be to Lucina! This name the grove (lucus) gave to you, or as you, goddess, control the origin of light. I pray, kind Lucina, that you may save pregnant girls, and bring out the burden gently from the womb when it is full grown!

Throughout the account it is clear that women are given a most conspicuous role. Ovid's address to the bride offers advice on how to conceive. In the myth, Ovid specifies the women in question to be the Sabines, whom Romulus has recently taken by force. Fertility forms the core of the famous myth of the rape of the Sabine women: the original community of the settlers of Rome, shepherds and asylum seekers, is by a number of sources⁵ reported to be in a desperate situation for its lack of female population. This account of the origin of the Lupercalia builds on the fertility issues opened up by the myth of the rape of the Sabines: Romulus steals women to start a society, but the women themselves are here found to be infertile. However, to explore the fertility aspect of the Lupercalia, one must first thoroughly analyse this passage in Ovid, which presents us with several issues.

Firstly, we do not know whether Ovid had a source for this peculiar story, as no earlier author mentions it. Secondly, this aetiology considerably differs from other myths that purport to explain the flagellation aspect of the Lupercalia, which seem to stress the male participants of the festival and their heroic feats.⁶ Thirdly, the greatest difference between this and other accounts is the goddess who resolves the fertility problem (*Iuno Lucina*), in whose grove the action occurs, and whose voice is heard giving the reply. Juno Lucina is otherwise not known to have played a role in the Lupercalia.⁷

⁵ Liv. 1.9; Dion. Hal. 2.30-1; Plut. *Rom.* 14; Cic. *Rep.* 2.7.12; Var. *Ling.* 6.20; Serv. *Aen.* 8.635-6; Flor. 1.1.10; Tert. *De spect.* 5; *De viris illustribus Romae* 2.1-2. This myth is further discussed under heading 3.1.6

⁶ See Robinson 2011: 277-9. On these aetiological myths see pp. 53-66.

⁷ But we shall presently see that another form of Juno is mentioned by Festus.

The first issue posed here is impossible to answer.⁸ As to the second, the existence of different aetiological myths should not surprise us. Each one should be taken in its own right, as explaining a particular aspect or feature of the festival, not in any case directly revealing some ‘original meaning’ of the festival as a whole. Aetiological myths may be adapted or wholly invented by interpreters who seek to give meaning to the traditional or incomprehensible elements.⁹ Thus, no myth should be taken at face value and a myth should be analysed for elements it strives to explain in the ritual.¹⁰

What does Ovid’s aetiological myth try to explain? The fertility aspect of the Lupercalia, performed through the flagellation of women, is the ritual element under discussion.¹¹ The poet explains it by presenting a mythical case of sterility solved by divine intervention. The presence of Juno Lucina in an *aition* for the festival of Faunus is the most puzzling element in this account. No other source refers to Lucina as having any relationship to the Lupercalia, and Ovid consistently refers to Faunus as the god of the festival in the *Fasti* in all instances.¹²

One should be careful when interpreting various forms of Juno in Rome. The goddess had many epithets, which often represent not only her different aspects, but also foreign imports, enemy goddesses whose cult became settled in the city.¹³ This will require us to tread carefully and make every effort to study the many forms of Juno in order to understand why she appears in the context of the Lupercalia. As for Lucina, the epigraphic evidence demonstrates that she was an especially popular deity amongst the population,¹⁴ and literary sources describe her as a divine midwife.¹⁵

⁸ On Porte’s hypothesis see below, p. 27.

⁹ See Barchiesi 1997: 142-8, 214-37.

¹⁰ If one is primarily interested in ancient religion. Literary scholars will of course have other concerns.

¹¹ As Robinson (2011: 278) concludes: ‘Ovid’s story explains the link between fertility and the goatskin whip.’

¹² Throughout his treatment of the Lupercalia (*F.* 2.267-424); and again at 5.101-2. See also pp. 71-2.

¹³ The most famous case is that of Juno Regina, who was the tutelary goddess of Veii, imported in 392 BC. For a survey of Juno’s epithets and the bibliography see Dury-Moyaers and Renard 1981: 142-202.

¹⁴ Schultz 2006: 50-2, 55-7.

Ovid also makes this clear by concluding his account with a prayer for easy delivery, which he will come to repeat in his treatment of the Matronalia.¹⁶ Juno Lucina is thus in charge of a woman as she gives birth. It is easy to see how one can overstep the thin line from pregnancy to fertility. Fertility concerns the means to conceive, and Lucina oversaw the safe delivery of a child already conceived. Ovid apparently associates these two categories implying the former at the beginning (*Nupta, quid expectas...*) and the latter at the end of his story (*Gratia Lucinae...*). Lucina was an epithet of both Juno and Diana, but Ovid's placing of the myth in the Esquiline grove of Juno makes it clear whom he means. That Juno should appear in the context of pregnancy is not at all surprising. Green shows that the ancients saw pregnancy and delivery as closely connected and *Lucina* naturally oversaw the months of gestation as well as the cycle of menstruation.¹⁷ However, as Foucher rightly argues,¹⁸ this does not imply that Lucina had a role at the rituals of the Lupercalia, which concern the means to conceive. Ovid's myth does not place Juno's intervention at the rituals of the Lupercalia, but he does associate her with the women and the whip. Should we here distinguish between the state religion (*theologia civilis*) and poetic invention (*theologia poetarum*), to put it in Varro's terms?¹⁹

Such a simple dismissal of Ovid's myth is precluded by another source, which refers to Juno in the context of the ritual. Paul the Deacon, a Carolingian scholar, who wrote an epitome of Sextus Pompeius Festus' dictionary, writes under *Februarius*:²⁰

Februarius mensis dictus, quod tum, id est extremo mense anni, populus februaretur, id est lustraretur ac purgaretur, vel a Iunone Februata, quam alii Februaem, Romani Februlim vocant, quod ipsi eo mense sacra fiebant,

¹⁵ Plaut. *Aul.* 692, *Truc.* 476; Ter. *An.* 473, *Ad.* 487; Plin. *HN.* 16.235; Var. *Ling.* 5.49-51, 5.69; Cicero *N.D.* 2.68; Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 77; Paul. *Fest.* s.v. *supercillia*; Ov. *Met.* 5.309, 9.293; Serv. *Aen.* 4.518; Tert. *Ad nat.* 39; *Schol. Bern. in Verg. Ecl.* 4.62.

¹⁶ I.e. the Kalends of March, *dies natalis* of Lucina's Esquiline temple (*F.* 3.245-58). See below, p. 24.

¹⁷ In her discussion of Diana Lucina (C.M.C. Green 2007: 135-8), but the conclusion is equally valid in the case of Juno as the epithet (and its obstetric function) was shared by both the goddesses.

¹⁸ 1976: 277.

¹⁹ One of the most frequently discussed fragments of Varro. See Rüpke 2012: 172-85.

²⁰ Paul. *Fest.* 75L.

eiusque feriae erant Lupercalia, quo die mulieres februabantur a lupercis amiculo Iunonis, id est pelle caprina; quam ob causam is quoque dies Februatus appellabatur. quaecumque denique purgamenti causa in quibusque sacrificiis adhibentur, februa appellantur. id vero, quod purgatur, dicitur februarum.

The month of February is so called, as then, i.e. in the last month of the year, the people are februated, i.e. purified, or from Juno Februata, whom others call Februalis, and the Romans Februlis, as her rites are observed in that month, and her festival was the Lupercalia, which day women are februated by the Luperci using Juno's cloak, i.e. goatskin. For this reason that day also has been called Februatus. Therefore, whatever objects are used for the purpose of purification in any sacrifice are called 'februa'. Indeed, that which is purified is called 'februarum'.

While Ovid's *Iuno Lucina* plays a role in the poet's aetiological myth, here *Iuno Februata* is directly referred to as the divinity of the festival. The appellation *Februata* with its variants *Februalis* and *Februlis*, seems to make Juno's role even more problematic as two epithets (with their variants) would complicate understanding her role at the festival. However, *Februata* is actually easier to account for in this context, and helps us clarify Ovid's myth. If one looks at Ovid's account carefully, the action he describes falls in the domain of Inuus, who, according to Livy²¹ presides over the Lupercalia. Inuus is the god of sexual penetration and identified with Faunus.²² The strange injunction of the tale specifies that a he-goat should enter Italian women.²³ As Le Bonniec observed, the word used is *inire*, implying penetration, the same verb from which Inuus is best derived, as attested in Servius.²⁴

Faunus or Inuus, a god of many names, is also referred to as *deus Februus*, closely related to *februum*, the purifying instrument of the Luperci (whip).²⁵ While Faunus received the epithet *Februus* ('purifier'), Juno was denoted with the passive form *Februata*, which we could translate as 'purified', just like Festus' alternative

²¹ Liv. 1.5.2.

²² Serv. *Aen.* 6.775; Prob. *G.* 1.10, *OGR* 4.6. See p. 243-4 below.

²³ This obvious sexual aspect of the Lupercalia has been noted by many scholars (Wiseman 1995a: 1-15, Holleman 1974: 27-38; North 2008: 151-2). I return to the subject below (pp. 34-6) and in chapter 2.3.

²⁴ *Inuus a ineundo passim cum omnibus animalibus* (*Aen.* 6.775). The first to observe the connection between Livy's *Inuus* (1.5.2) and Ovid's *inire* was apparently Rose (1933: 387); followed by Le Bonniec (1969: note on 2.441). Dumézil (1970a: 349), and North (2008: 150) argue that the passage makes more sense in relation to Inuus.

²⁵ On *deus Februus* and *dies Februatus* see chapter 1.2.

name for the day of the festival itself (*dies Februatus*). The forms Februalis and Februlis do not seem to add much to understanding the role of Juno here (other than perhaps testifying to the vagueness of this back formation), but the passive Februata brings her in line with the women who are purified at the festival (*mulieres februabantur*). Februata is otherwise unattested in cult; the few other authors that name her are very late and seem confused as to her identity, but they associate her with pregnancy and purification,²⁶ echoing Festus. The mysterious Juno Februata may reflect women's involvement with the festival and the important role female fertility occupies as the perceived purpose of the ritual. The relationship between Februus and Februata equals the relationship between active and passive (*februum—februatum*) as expressed in the last sentence of Paulus' passage.

It would seem that the gloss Februarius, as we find it in Paulus, is incomplete because it mentions only the goddess and omits Faunus, the god of the festival. The solution lies with the fact that this was most probably not a definitive statement of Festus. One should always bear in mind a number of possible problems in transmission, especially when the text we have is Paulus' abbreviation of Festus' work, which was in turn largely derived from the Augustan scholar Verrius Flaccus.²⁷ Based on his extensive research of Paulus' epitome, North warns of Paulus' errors in summarizing Festus and suggests that there is a lacuna in this entry, as indicated by the absence of a second *vel*. He therefore supplements 'vel a Iunone Februata' with 'vel ab Inuo'. The scribe most likely jumped over the text because of the similarity of phrasing.²⁸ I find this reconstruction plausible, and we can see it fits well with the majority of sources that name Faunus as the god of the festival, and a potentially minor involvement of Juno as a goddess of the women. Thus, the exertions of scholars

²⁶ *Mythographi Romani* 3.3, Martianus Cappella 2.147-52. See Porte 1973: 188-9; Foucher 1976: 277. For Ioannes Lydus *Mens.* 4.25 see below, p. 47-8.

²⁷ See Glinister and Woods 2007; *FRHist* 1.67-8.

²⁸ North's reconstruction: 'uel a Iunone Februata (quam alii Februaem, Romani Februlim vocant) quod ipsi eo mense sacra fiunt, <uel ab Inuo, quod ei quoque sacra fiunt>, eiusque feriae sunt Lupercalia' (North 2008: 149-50).

who in various ways attempted to exaggerate Juno's role in the Lupercalia are based on misunderstanding these two essential sources that relate her to the festival.²⁹ To be clear I do not wish to completely exclude Juno,³⁰ for it would seem she came to play a minor role in the fertility aspect of the festival.

This most probably reflects the influence of popular religion on an ancient public celebration. Given that the Lupercalia was important for women attempting to conceive, it would hardly be surprising if they brought their fertility goddess into its rites. It seems the cult of Juno was otherwise amenable to popular religion. Ovid places his *aetion* in the grove of Lucina on the Esquiline. This was adjacent to her Esquiline temple, which Verrius Flaccus says was vowed and dedicated by women and not a magistrate (as in the usual procedure).³¹ Pliny dates the dedication to 375 BC, a year without magistrates, and Ziolkowski understands the temple must have then started as 'an exclusively women's, i.e. non-public foundation', which later received official status.³² Schultz is more cautious and argues for a female induced refurbishment or expansion based on comparison with other better attested examples, including the restoration of a temple of Juno Sospita in 90BC, inspired by the patrician Caecilia Metella.³³ Thus, popular female involvement in the cults of Juno was not unusual, and the appearance of Juno Februata/Februlis at the Lupercalia seems to reflect this tendency.

Paulus' excerpt of Festus bears out another interesting connection with Juno. It refers to the whip used by the Luperci with the peculiar expression *amiculo Iunonis*. *Amiculo* could be either the ablative case of *amiculum* (cloak) or *amiculus* (little

²⁹ Franklin, following the trends of her time, wrote that the Mediterranean earth goddess presided over the festival (1921: 53-63). For similar attempts see Martorana 1976: 241-58 and Duval 1976: 253-72 (with summary in Dury-Moyaers and Renard 1981: 153-7); Köves-Zulauf 1990: 246-56.

³⁰ After his proposed reconstruction North says (2008: 150): 'In this case, we can in fact be certain that Iuno was not the deity of the Lupercalia at all.'

³¹ *Fasti Praenestini* on the Kalends of March (see Scullard 1981: 75-7). See also Varro *Ling.* 5.49 and Pliny *HN* 16.235. The precise location is disputed (see Haselberger s.v. *Iuno Lucina, Aedes*).

³² See Ziolkowski 1992: 67-71.

³³ Schultz 2006: 26-8, 41-2.

friend). North argues for the latter option suggesting this was a colloquial name for the whip of the Luperci at the time of Verrius Flaccus, Festus' main source.³⁴ Frazer preferred the former interpretation, as 'Juno's cloak' brings us back to Juno Sospita, who wore a cloak of goatskin.³⁵ Cicero cites it as one of her regular attributes³⁶ and his description is confirmed by the archaeological record.³⁷ However, Cicero continues by pointing out that Sospita is different from either Roman or Argive Juno.³⁸ Sospita was the Juno of Lanuvium and was especially worshipped there in her temple.³⁹ None of the sources associate her with the Lupercalia, and the connection rests only on the goatskin as her attribute.

Why does Festus refer to the whip as her *amiculus* (or *amiculum*)? I believe this might have been partly facilitated by a topographical reality. At the beginning of his treatment of February, Ovid mentions a derelict temple of Sospita situated right next to the large temple of Magna Mater.⁴⁰ This religious complex on the southwest Palatine was close to the cave Lupercal, where the rituals of the day started.⁴¹ The proximity of the two cults may have resulted in a natural assimilation, as people could connect the goat whip of the Luperci with the goatskin cloak of Juno, who was so depicted at a small distance up the hill.

There is much evidence that these whips were one of the most prominent features of the festival. Another gloss of Festus informs us of a second name for the Luperci:⁴²

³⁴ North 2008: 151.

³⁵ Frazer 1929: 2.332.

³⁶ Goatskin, spear, shield and upturned shoes: *cum pelle caprina cum hasta cum scutulo cum calceolis repandis* (*N. D.* 1.82).

³⁷ Chiarucci 1983: 56-79.

³⁸ *At non est talis Argia nec Romana Iuno. ergo alia species Iunonis Argivis alia Lanuinis.* Schultz (2006: 22-8) cautions against perceiving Sospita as having anything to do with fertility.

³⁹ See Pease 1955: *ad loc.*

⁴⁰ *F.* 2.55-9. The date of dedication is confirmed by the pre-Caesarian *Fasti Antiates* and archaeological evidence seems to confirm it stood next to the temple of Magna Mater (Coarelli in *LTUR*, s.v. *Iuno Sospita (Palatium)*, *Aedes*. Further discussion in Robinson 2011: 94-6.

⁴¹ See 2.1, pp. 116-7 for a map and discussion.

⁴² Paul. *Fest.* 49L.

CREP[P]OS, id est Lupercos, dicebant a crepitu pellicularum, quem faciunt verberantes. mos enim erat Romanis in Lupercalibus nudos discurrere et pellibus obvias quasque feminas ferire.

Creppi, that is to say Luperci, are so called from the clatter of the goatskins, which they produce while lashing. At the Lupercalia, it was customary among the Romans to run around naked and strike with skins every woman they encountered.

The appellation *Creppi* is otherwise unattested, and whatever its linguistic etymology may be,⁴³ it is notable that Festus derives the word from the sound of the lashing skins, again stressing the central event of the festival. In the above passage from the *Fasti*, Ovid explains the same spectacular rite, focusing on the he-goat. He refers to it as *hircus* in line 441, and denotes the same animal with a synonym *caper* a few lines below (445-6).⁴⁴ The he-goat also plays a considerable role in a number of other authors, who have him sacrificed, flayed, and his skin used in the ritual.⁴⁵ As said, Ovid's myth attempts to explain the flagellation in view of fertility. As the ancient observers watched the naked Luperci running and striking women, they must have also recognized the goatskin whip as an instrument of fertilisation. I propose that these two factors were instrumental in relating the Lupercalia to Juno, given that the goat is associated with several epithets of the goddess. This is why Festus mentions a mysterious *Iuno Februata*, which we cannot trace to any other cult. Her name is a clear derivation from *februum*, and most likely a back-formation from *dies Februatus*, as the day of the festival was anciently known.⁴⁶

Along with Sospita, another form of Juno was associated with the goat, Caprotina, which is clearly derived from *capra*. Little is known of her festival (*Nonae Caprotinae* in July), but it was undoubtedly associated with fertility. Female slaves sacrificed to Juno at Goat's Marsh (*Palus caprae*) under a wild fig tree (*caprificus*) and used the milk sap of the tree. They then ran about in jest shouting obscenities at

⁴³ Frazer (1929: 2.332) had a theory that would explain it as 'he-goats'. It rests on a shaky argument deriving *creppus* from *crepa* and then *capra*, rejected by historical linguists (Walde and Hofmann 1938: 290; Ernout and Meillet 1979: 150).

⁴⁴ A variant reading of the manuscript has 'caper hirtus'. On *sacer hircus* see Murgatroyd 2005: 117-8.

⁴⁵ Plut. *Rom.* 21.7, *Quaest. Rom.* 68, 111; Dion. Hal. 1.80.1; Val. Max. 2.2.9.

⁴⁶ According to Varro, see p. 45.

the men they met and finally played a mock battle amongst themselves.⁴⁷ A number of fertility elements (goat, fig tree, milk) parallel that of the Lupercalia⁴⁸ and some relationship between the two ancient festivals cannot be excluded.

In an attempt to explain away Ovid's myth, Porte argues that the poet transferred a story original with Caprotina to the Lupercalia.⁴⁹ This does not seem plausible, although Porte is right to say we should not take Ovid's mythic Etruscan augur and his Juno as facts of the ritual. But we should not entirely dismiss the myth. Festus' mention of Juno Februata enables us to understand that the appearance of Juno has to do with the role of women at the festival.⁵⁰ Ovid's myth ties this in with the role of Juno as a fertility goddess, centering on prominent goat associations which her various forms shared with the Lupercalia.

This should not be surprising as comparative religion shows that goat symbolism frequently plays a role in mythologies of fertility.⁵¹ However, the secondary involvement of Juno in this respect does not detract from the fact that this is primarily a festival of Faunus. The penetrative use of goatskin whips (*februa*) fits Inuus, who is also called Februus, both epithets of Faunus. The offering is that of a he-goat, which would imply the divinity is male.⁵² The function of the goatskin whip gains further weight in the light of Indo-European comparative evidence.⁵³ The IE root from which *caper* is derived, is used to denote both a he-goat and penis, as attested in various languages: Skt. *kap-r-th(-a-)* 'penis', related to Gk. *κάπρος* 'wild

⁴⁷ See Scullard 1981: 161-3; Dury-Moyaers and Renard 1981: 157-61; Woodard 2013: 3-8.

⁴⁸ If Woodard (2013: 178) is right to identify Augustine's mention of obscene celebrations of the Fugalia with the Poplifugia (itself closely related to the Nonae Caprotinae) that would also parallel the changes we detect in the Lupercalia in late antiquity (discussed in chapter 2.3).

⁴⁹ A fig, not a he-goat is the central element of the July festival, but Porte (1973: 183-8) tries to argue this away by means of substitution.

⁵⁰ Which seems to be very old, as we shall see on pp. 171-4, 195-201.

⁵¹ For numerous comparative parallels see *ER* 13.234-6.

⁵² The rule that gods receive male, and goddesses female victims has been accepted since Wissowa (1912: 413), but has recently been questioned. Bremmer (1996: 253) points out that, for Greek religion, this was probably more of a preference than an absolute, as shown by the archaeological evidence.

⁵³ See also the discussion of the taboos of the *flamen Dialis* in 3.3.1.

boar', Lat. *caper* 'he-goat', Umbr. *kaprum* 'caprum', OIcel. *hafr* 'goat', OE *haefer* 'goat'.⁵⁴

Thus, Ovid's story, far from being inconsistent with the Lupercalia, has an internal logic as it provides a background for the fertility aspect of the festival attested in a number of other sources. This aspect is most evident in the ritual application of the goatskin whip as a fertilising instrument. With a certain degree of poetic licence,⁵⁵ Ovid provides a mythological background to this part of the rite. As the Lupercalia plays a prominent role in the Roman calendar,⁵⁶ Ovid covers the subject extensively. Also, the author of *Ars Amatoria* could hardly miss the opportunity to present a spectacular ritual with a prominent sexual aspect. One should bear in mind that other sources mention the Lupercalia in various contexts, the subject of the ritual itself being of varying importance to them. It is Ovid who dedicates himself to the day of the Lupercalia, describing its various aspects in no less than 186 verses (2.267-452), over a fifth of the second book of the *Fasti*.

The only other source that might equal Ovid in his treatment of the Lupercalia is Plutarch, who mentions the fertility of women twice in his descriptions of the festival. The first instance appears in the context of the circumstances that led up to Caesar's assassination. This will be the subject of a separate chapter, but we are presently concerned with Plutarch's general description of the ritual proceedings:⁵⁷

ἦν μὲν γὰρ ἡ τῶν Λουπερκαλίων ἑορτή, περὶ ἧς πολλοὶ γράφουσιν, ὡς ποιμένων τὸ παλαιὸν εἶη, καὶ τι καὶ προσήκει τοῖς Ἀρκαδικοῖς Λυκαίοις. τῶν δ' εὐγενῶν νεανίσκων καὶ ἀρχόντων πολλοὶ διαθέουσιν ἀνὰ τὴν πόλιν γυμνοί, σκῦτεσι λασίοις τοὺς ἐμποδῶν ἐπὶ παιδιᾷ καὶ γέλωτι παιοντες· πολλὰ δὲ καὶ τῶν ἐν τέλει γυναικῶν ἐπίτηδες ὑπαντῶσαι παρέχουσιν ὥσπερ

⁵⁴ Gamqrelidze and Ivanov 1995: 435; Ernout and Meillet 1979: s.v. *caper*; Mallory and Adams 1997: 229; Mayrhofer 1986: s.v. *káprth-*. Contra Walde and Hofmann (s.v. *caper*, 1938: 157); de Vaan (2008: 89, s.v. *caper*) completely omits the *ka-prtha* connection.

⁵⁵ The Caesarian associations of the Lupercalia (on which see chapter 1.5) made the Augustan festival controversial, and there may be reason to think Ovid alludes to Augustus through Romulus (see Robinson 2011: 279-82).

⁵⁶ The Lupercalia is one of the old festivals inscribed with large letters in the pre-Julian *Fasti Antiaties*, i.e. the ancient calendar of the republic (Degrassi 1963: 4). The antiquity of the calendar is subject to discussion; see Valli 2007: 102-5 and Rüpke 2011: 64-6.

⁵⁷ Chapter, 1.5; Plut. *Caes.* 61.

ἐν διδασκάλου τῷ χεῖρει ταῖς πληγαῖς, πεπεισμένοι πρὸς εὐτοκίαν κυούσαις, ἀγόνοις δὲ πρὸς κήσιν ἀγαθὸν εἶναι.

It was the festival of the Lupercalia, about which many write that it was a pastoral festival from ancient times, and it is in some way connected to Arcadian Lycaea. Many noble youths and magistrates run through the city naked, striking with shaggy thongs those whom they meet in laughter and sport. And many women, even those of rank, deliberately coming to meet them, stretch their hands to the blows like children at school, as they are convinced that this facilitates an easy delivery for those who are pregnant, and conception for those who are barren.

Plutarch presents the Lupercalia as a pastoral festival, celebrated in an atmosphere of fun and laughter. Young men strike passers-by with shaggy thongs,⁵⁸ and women in particular are willing to participate in this practice. To this should be added Plutarch's other treatment of the subject, which is more extensive, but where the fertility aspect itself is explicitly stated in a shorter form:⁵⁹

σφάπτουσι γὰρ αἶγας, εἶτα μειρακίων δυοῖν ἀπὸ γένους προσαχθέντων αὐτοῖς, οἱ μὲν ἡμαγμένη μαχαίρᾳ τοῦ μετώπου θιγγάνουσιν, ἕτεροι δ' ἀπομάπτουσιν εὐθύς, ἔριον βεβρεγμένον γάλακτι προσφέροντες. γελᾶν δὲ δεῖ τὰ μειράκια μετὰ τὴν ἀπόμαξιν. ἐκ δὲ τούτου τὰ δέρματα τῶν αἰγῶν κατατεμόντες διαθέουσιν ἐν περιζώμασι γυμνοί, τοῖς σκύτεσι τὸν ἐμποδὸν παίοντες. αἱ δ' ἐν ἡλικίᾳ γυναῖκες οὐ φεύγουσιν τὸ παιεσθαι, νομίζουσαι πρὸς εὐτοκίαν καὶ κήσιν συνεργεῖν.

They slaughter goats and then, after two young men of noble birth are brought to them, they touch their foreheads with a bloody knife, and others immediately wipe it off using wool drenched in milk. The young men must laugh after their foreheads are wiped. After that, having cut the goatskins, they run around belted but naked, striking the passer-by with thongs. And women of childbearing age do not avoid the blows, believing that they help for an easy delivery and conception.

The last two sentences sum up the same information that can be gathered from Plutarch's other account in *Life of Caesar*. The difference between Ovid and Plutarch in this respect is obvious. While both mention the female participants and the fertility aspect, Ovid has the women of his *action* offer their backs (*sua terga*) to be struck, while in Plutarch the blows are obviously received on the palms, as is clear from the schoolteacher comparison. The latter is also affirmed by Juvenal who

⁵⁸ Which would fit the MS reading *caper hirtus* in Ovid (see above, p. 26, n. 44).

⁵⁹ Plut. *Rom.* 21.4-5.

supplies the same information in a cursory manner when disparaging homosexual marriage:⁶⁰

sed melius, quod nil animis in corpora iuris
natura indulget: steriles moriuntur, et illis
turgida non prodest condita pyxide Lyde,
nec prodest agili palmas praebere Luperco.

But this is better, for nature does not allow the spirit to interfere in the rights of the body: they die unfertile, and the medicine chest of the bloated Lyde is useless for them, nor is it of any use to stretch their palms to the swift Luperco.

As both Juvenal and Plutarch wrote in the late first and early second century AD, one may infer that this change could be a development that came after Ovid's time. Furthermore, Plutarch writes that a goat (and a dog) are sacrificed. Although αἶξ can sometimes be used to refer to the masculine, it is chiefly feminine,⁶¹ and usually Greek signifies the masculine with τράγος, which would correspond to Ovid's *caper/hircus*.⁶² The authors thus concur on the species of the animal, but not its gender. In both of Plutarch's reports, it is primarily the passerby (τοὺς ἐμποδῶν; τὸν ἐμποδῶν) in general who is struck; only then does he specify that women voluntarily participate in the practice. By contrast, Ovid's aetiological account stresses the effect of the ritual on women's ability to conceive, and closes with a brief prayer to Lucina for easy delivery. Plutarch juxtaposes conception and easy delivery as the effects of the ritual.

Plutarch is the only ancient author to specifically mention a dog among the offerings, as well as the peculiar ritual involving milk, a dagger and blood.⁶³ This has led some scholars to the conclusion that Plutarch is a more extensive and reliable source, and that Ovid's aetiological account is the poet's invention. They have thereby also concluded that the Lupercalia originally must have been a ritual of purification, and that the Luperci initially struck everyone in their path as a means of lustration,

⁶⁰ Juv. *Sat.* 2.139-42.

⁶¹ See *LSJ*, s. v. αἶξ.

⁶² All other authors speak of *caper* (Quint. 1.5.66; Val. Max. 2.2.9; Serv. *Aen.* 8.343) as Ulf rightly observes (1982: 52-3). On the general rule for the gender of sacrificial animals, see p. 27, n. 52.

⁶³ Which I have called the bloodrite, see pp. 62-3.

arguing that striking women in particular and female fertility is a later addition.⁶⁴ Thus, Holleman postulates several stages in the development of the Lupercalia, and argues that fertility was a later accretion, based on a fragment of Livy, which we discuss below.⁶⁵ Wiseman picks up on this tentative argument to build a theory of his own, but is more circumspect as to its overall accuracy.⁶⁶

However, from the evidence here provided by the ancient authors themselves one could also allow the other option, i.e. that fertility is an original element of the cult, and that striking everyone in their path is simply a later licence indulged by the frivolous Luperci. Arguably, this is a more plausible option than the hypothesis that women suddenly and spontaneously imagined that their fertility would benefit from a ritual that is solely intended as a general purification.⁶⁷ Both Ovid and Plutarch generally concur in the explanation of the ritual as ensuring female fertility.⁶⁸ It is not easy to simply dismiss such insistence on the part of the two most extensive sources we have on the Lupercalia. We shall see that both the archaeological evidence and other sources corroborate their testimony. One of these is Servius, the famous commentator on Vergil. After collecting a large amount of varied information on the cave, the Lupercal, he concludes his note on the Lupercalia with the sentence (A. 8.343):

non nulli propter sterilitatem hoc sacrum dicunt a Romulo constitutum, ideoque et puellae de loro capri caeduntur, ut careant sterilitate et fecundae sint: nam pellem ipsam capri veteres februm vocabant.

Some say that this festival was instituted by Romulus because of sterility. And therefore the girls are struck by a goatskin lash, so that they may be free of

⁶⁴ Thus Porte (1973: 171-89) with references going back to Deubner and 19th-century scholars, too numerous to list.

⁶⁵ Another major reform Holleman (1973: 260-8) advocates is one by Augustus, which cannot stand in view of the comparative evidence I present in chapter 3.3.

⁶⁶ Wiseman (1995a: 14-5) adopts Holleman's point on introducing flagellation in 276 BC (see below on Livy), but is right to admit: 'This reconstruction is, of course, in the highest degree speculative'. See my critique of Wiseman on pp. 81-2, 226-8 and the introduction.

⁶⁷ This statement is intended solely for the sake of the argument (to show how implausible it is that fertility is 'a later accretion'). The aspects of fertility and purification are not in fact incompatible, as we shall see in the next chapter (1.2).

⁶⁸ Notably, in both of Plutarch's accounts, the beneficial aspects of the ritual include both easy delivery and conception. This reinforces my hypothesis on the later involvement of Juno in the rite.

sterility and become fertile. For the ancients called the very skin of the he-goat 'februm'.

Since Servius here offers no additional information, Ovid is probably hiding behind Servius' phrase *non nulli*, as the Romulus myth is recorded in no other source. It is also possible that both Ovid and Servius were working with a source that has been lost. However, Servius' note is most probably derived from Ovid as can be deduced from the fact that he also follows him in the sentence preceding this one.⁶⁹

Another important source to explicitly mention the fertility aspect of the Lupercalia is pope Gelasius.⁷⁰ He claims to draw this argument from a lost fragment of Livy, which Holleman used to base his hypothesis on fertility as a later addition. Again, we should look at the source carefully before reaching any conclusions. At the very end of the fifth century, the Lupercalia defiantly stood as one of the last remnants of the old pre-Christian religion, well after emperor Theodosius' decrees on the prohibition of pagan rites (389-391 AD). Gelasius, as the bishop of Rome (492-496 AD), severely opposed Christians participating in the ritual, and wrote a disparaging letter to the Christian senator Andromachus. Gelasius accuses him of defending the ancient rite based on the belief in its beneficent ability to heal diseases.⁷¹ To counter this notion, the bishop refers to Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* where the reason for the institution of the Lupercalia is specified to be the sterility of women.⁷²

Dic mihi, cum saepe numero in Romanis historiis legatur Livio ora<to>re saepissime in hac urbe exorta pestilentia infinita hominum millia deperiisse, atque eo frequenter ventum, ut vix esset, unde illis bellicosis temporibus exercitus potuisset adscribi, illo tempore deo tuo Februario minime litabatur an etiam cultus hic omnino nihil proderat? illo tempore Lupercalia non celebr<ab>antur? nec enim dicturus es haec sacra adhuc illo tempore non coepisse, quae ante Romulum ab Euandro in Italiam perhibentur adlata.

⁶⁹ *Aen.* 8.343. See p. 56. This corresponds to Ovid's other aetiological myth, intended to explain the nakedness of the running Luperci, as presented in *F.* 2.359-80.

⁷⁰ On Gelasius and his historical context see Demacopoulos (2013: 73-101) who shows the pope was not very powerful at the time. Contrary to popular belief, we have no evidence that he 'abolished' the Lupercalia (see p. 166).

⁷¹ Several times, he accuses Andromachus of believing in the salubrious effects of the Lupercalia. Especially striking is his use of word *salus* and its cognates (see Holleman 1974: 47-8; McLynn 2008: 165-6). However, as McLynn points out this is a standard topos in Christian invective.

⁷² *Gel.* 12-13.

Lupercalia autem propter quid instituta sunt, quantum ad ipsius superstitionis commenta respectat, Livius secunda decade loquitur nec propter morbos inhibendos instituta commemorat, sed propter sterilitatem, ut ei videtur, mulierum, quae tunc acciderat, exhibenda. Proinde si vel ad hoc ipsum aliquid hoc valeret, hoc intermisso non morbus acciderit, contra quem Lupercalia reperta non sunt, sed feminae nequaquam generare debuerant, pro quarum fecunditate concinuntur inventa.

Tell me, since it can often be read in the Roman histories, written by Livy, that so often in this city there was a plague during which countless thousands of men died, and so it frequently happened that there was barely anyone who could be drafted into the military in these times of war, was there no sacrifice to your god Februarius at that time? Or was this cult of no use at all? Were not the Lupercalia celebrated at that time? For you are not to say that this festival had not yet begun at that time, as it is reported that Evander had brought it to Italy before the time of Romulus.

Why the Lupercalia was instituted, as much as it concerns the fictions of the rite itself, Livy writes in his second decade: he does not relate it as instituted for preventing disease, but created, as it seems to him, for the sterility of women, which had occurred at the time. Therefore, if this were of any worth for this festival, when [or if] it was suspended, an illness would not occur, as the Lupercalia was not intended as an antidote for that, but women should stop giving birth as it was for their fertility that this is said to have been established.

Gelasius seems to be drawing on a lost section of Livy's second decade, roughly corresponding to the first half of the third century BC. He does not provide the details of Livy's account, but whatever his description was, it must have differed from that of Ovid to some extent, as the characters could not have been the same. For it is highly improbable that Livy describes Romulus and the Sabines in his second decade, i.e. third century BC. As Gelasius notes, this would contradict Livy's mention of Evander starting the Lupercalia much before Romulus, which we have in Livy's extant first book.⁷³

It is unclear why Livy returns to the Lupercalia again in the second decade, but apparently he revisits the festival to explain it through an *aition* of female sterility, much like Ovid. Gelasius makes a strong distinction between the benefits of female fertility and health in general, which he imputes to Andromachus. However, it remains unclear whether Livy also made this distinction. Holleman wants to link the

⁷³ Liv. 1.5.1-3.

two aspects, and attempts to trace Gelasius' reference to the plague (*exorta pestilentia*) to an episode in the Christian historian Orosius, who otherwise also draws on Livy:⁷⁴ in the year 276BC, a terrible plague swept the city and caused women and cattle to abort their unborn offspring, frequently dying in the process.⁷⁵ Holleman connects this to the sterility referred to in Gelasius and concludes that the Lupercalia must have been reformed in the aftermath of the plague, inferring that the senate instituted the change and made the Luperci add the lashing of women to their ritual repertoire. However, as Holleman himself points out, Gelasius 'quae tunc acciderat' (which then happened) is not a citation of Livy, but the bishop's own comment.⁷⁶ Moreover, Gelasius' strong distinction between disease and sterility separates the plagues (in passage 12) from the sterility of women (passage 13) as the cause of the Lupercalia. The fact that he drew both examples from Livy's lost decade does not imply they come from the same context. In other words, the connection between plague and sterility of women (as the purpose of the Lupercalia) need not be Livy's,⁷⁷ and Orosius' passage might easily refer to a completely different occurrence. Plagues seemed to be a frequent problem in the first half of the 3rd century BC, as shown by the episode of the introduction of the Greek god Asclepius in 292 BC. This also is mentioned by Livy, incidentally in the very last passage that was preserved to us from his tenth book.⁷⁸

Thus, the only safe conclusion we can draw from Gelasius' reference to Livy is that the historian also saw the purpose of the Lupercalia as promoting the fertility of women. This is in accord with the other sources we have studied in this chapter, particularly Ovid and Plutarch. Corroboration also comes from the archaeological

⁷⁴ Holleman 1974: 20-22.

⁷⁵ Holleman's wrongly refers to 4.4.2. The passage is Oros. *Hist. adversum Paganos* 4.2.2.

⁷⁶ Just like the clause *ut ei videtur*.

⁷⁷ A place where we do find plague and Luperca together is Pseudo-Plutarch's *Parallela Minora* 35: a woman named Valeria Luperca heals a plague in Falerii. However, the work is infamous for its unreliability, e.g. *FRHist* 1.79 calls it 'full of fictitious source-references and playful pseudo-scholarship'.

⁷⁸ Liv. 10.47.6-7, and also 10.31.8. See Oakley 2005: *ad loc.* with references.

record. The sarcophagus of Aelia Afanacia is dated to the late third century, but was reused in the fourth.⁷⁹ It was long dismissed as a representation of a Christian martyr, but the man in the centre resembles the Luperci found on two other monuments, also dated to the third century.⁸⁰ He is half-naked and raises a whip over a woman, who is being held up by her companions, with buttocks clearly exposed for the strike (figure 1). The representation is matched by a mosaic from Thysdrus (modern El Jem) in North Africa (figure 2):⁸¹ each month is illustrated with a picture, and Februarius presents a scene very similar to the one on the sarcophagus. A woman is hoisted by two men, and pulls up her skirt to receive the blow of a half-naked Lupercus.

Both these representations concur with Gelasius' understanding of the past of the ritual: women used to be stripped and flogged publicly.⁸² As North and McLynn argue, this indicates that the Lupercalia probably underwent change in late Antiquity. Juvenal and Plutarch described a few passing and rather innocuous hits on the palms, but now the artistic representations show a public spectacle. Although one might argue that the visual art exaggerates reality, Gelasius' testimony is also confirmed by the account of a fifth century scholiast to Juvenal. Attempting to explain Juvenal's mention of palms, he paints a picture similar to the one on the monuments:⁸³

steriles mulieres februantibus Lupercis se offerebant et ferula verberabantur... 'palmas' ideo dicit aut quia catomus levabantur aut quia a manibus vapula<ba>nt <ut> conciperent statim.

Infertile women used to expose themselves to the purifying Luperci and were lashed with a stick... He [i.e. Juvenal] says 'palms' either because they used to be hoisted up on the shoulders or because they were beaten on the hands so that they would immediately conceive.

⁷⁹ The sarcophagus was found in the Catacomb of St. Pretexta. The inscription was effaced and replaced with a Christian one. See Solin and Brandenburg 1980: 271-84.

⁸⁰ The monument of T. Claudius Liberalis from Tibur (see pp. 175-6). There is a third, undated monument from Benevento, reproduced and discussed in Veyne 1960: 102, 105.

⁸¹ From the *Maison des Moïses* in Thysdrus (today El Djem, Tunisia), dated to the Severan period of the 3rd century. See Parrish 1984: 156-60 and pl. 42; Foucher 1976: 278-9. A senator from the early fourth century built a *lararium* that represented two Luperci with whips (see Wiseman 1995a: 16).

⁸² *matronae nudato publice corpore vapulabant* (Gelasius 16).

⁸³ *Scholia in Iuvenalem vetustiora ad* 2.142. On the scholia see Cameron 2010: 569-76.

As North and McLynn observe, it is easy to see how the scholiast could pick up the latter idea from Juvenal, but the raising of the women is not attested earlier than in our artistic representations.⁸⁴ It is quite possible that both practices could have continued side by side,⁸⁵ but the verbs *verberare* and *vapulare* (the latter of which we also find in Gelasius) bear connotations of a strong beating and should point to an intensification of the violence, which Ovid seems to have hinted at with a reference to the beating of the girls' *terga* (backs).

North and McLynn point to another obvious difference between the earlier literary texts and the imperial monuments. The Luperci are depicted in proper clothing that covers almost half their body, and they carry properly made whips, in contrast to the makeshift thongs of goatskin in Ovid's and Plutarch's description. The visual art might be presenting an ideal of a Lupercus (in his dress and with his instrument) rather than a fact of life reality on the street.⁸⁶ However, the dressing might easily be a result of a natural evolution, which went with the intensification of the spectacular aspect of the rite.⁸⁷ Although our literary sources make no mention of this, it is not impossible that some of the Luperci would use their own clothes at an earlier period as well. For it is difficult to see how at least a dozen men would be supplied with coverings for their genitalia and all their whips, using the skin of a single goat.⁸⁸ Perhaps this is why Plutarch mentions goats (αἴγας) in the plural. It is interesting to observe that the whip on the mosaic of Thysdrus also appears to be premade rather than just a loose goatskin. It would be surprising if the monuments completely matched the literary record that predates them by centuries. Thus, we should allow for some variation in the clothes and gear of the Luperci through the ages.

⁸⁴ North and McLynn 2008: 179-81.

⁸⁵ The imperfect tense in scholia implies that the scholiast seeks to explain what Juvenal had been referring to (Cameron 2008: 575-80; North and McLynn 2008: n. 29).

⁸⁶ As North and McLynn (2008: 180) propose.

⁸⁷ Culminating in its performance by actors in the time of Gelasius (see chapter 2.3).

⁸⁸ No source mentions the precise number of the Luperci, but we know there were two groups, see p. 55. On the nudity of the Luperci see pp. 158-9.

To conclude, it seems that the festival changed over time, but both the monuments of late antiquity and our earlier literary sources stress the fertility aspect of the ritual. It was my intention in this opening chapter to present the sources that refer to the fertility aspect of the Lupercalia, and offer a careful analysis of each. This close reading reveals that fertility was a prominent aspect of the rite in all the historically attested periods. This challenges assumptions of a reform that would introduce it as a later addition. It also disproves an old theory that claims Juno was the sole or original goddess of the Lupercalia. I conclude that Juno's role at the Lupercalia was minor and her involvement was most probably a later development, caused by an overlap between the fertility aspect of the festival and that of the goddess (particularly through the common element of goatskin). The inescapable conclusion is that female fertility cannot be ignored. The advocates of a reform that sees fertility as a later addition usually dismiss it in favour of the purification aspect of the festival. However, as we shall presently see, this is a false dichotomy.



figure 1: sarcophagus of Aelia Afanacia, courtesy of *DAI* Rome



figure 2: Mosaic from *Maison de Moïse* in Thysdrus: February
now in *Musée archéologique de Sousse*
photo by Ad Meskens (shared under [wikimedia Creative Commons](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/))

1.2 Purification

In the previous chapter, we have seen that a number of modern scholars argue for a single aspect of the Lupercalia as the ‘original’ one and hence dismiss others (such as fertility) as later accretions.¹ However, a wide range of scholars across the international spectrum have argued that particular aspects need not be dismissed in favour of others.² In order to understand how the two aspects may fit together, one should first explain the significance of purifications. Lennon’s recent study of pollution and purification in Roman religion shows that they were primarily intended to remove negative aspects and ensure a normal continuation of social and religious order.³ By expelling matter that was perceived as ‘out of place’, one sought to restore a symbolic equilibrium and maintain (or restore) a positive state of affairs. In the case of the Lupercalia, female sterility had to be countered in order to procure the positive state of fertility. In other cases, hermaphrodites and Vestal virgins guilty of incest had to be removed from the community in order to restore the perceived notions of purity. In the context of illicit murder bloodshed had to be washed away and purified. Purifications were similarly conducted in the context of birth and death. Ritual of purification frequently involved disposing of negative matter, such as the rush puppets that were thrown into the Tiber at the ritual of the Argei, or the trash taken out of Vesta’s temple at the Vestalia.⁴

The Luperci did not discard pollution in a material way, but they were perceived as both purifying the city and preventing female sterility. The beneficial aspect of fertility, which was analysed in the previous chapter, is here complementary to the aspect of purification, not in any way opposed to it. Many rituals of purification

¹ Holleman in particular (see above); Michels 1953: 35-59; Porte 1973: 171-89; Scholz 1980: 318-22; Wiseman 1995a: 13-5.

² Foucher 1976: 273-80; Ulf 1982: 72-89; Mastrocinque 1993: 137-56; North 2008: 145-55; Koptev 2012: 110.

³ Lennon 2014; see also Lennon 2012: 43-58.

⁴ For the Argei see Ziolkowski 1999: 210-18; Lennon 2014: 163-5. On *stercus delatus* at the Vestalia see the discussion in Keegan 2008: 91-7.

entail the idea of removing a negative force and procuring a positive outcome. The Luperci prevented female sterility and invoked fertility, as explicitly stated by the sources examined in the previous chapter.⁵ Moreover, the Lupercalia was classed among lustrations, a particular type of Roman purification (which the Greeks did not have) that maintained continual protection in particular areas of social and religious life. While I will address the topic of lustrations in a separate chapter,⁶ here we turn to the sources that present the Lupercalia as a purification.

Februum

The purification aspect of the festival is the most explicitly attested of all its features and forms the subject of Ovid's introduction to the second book of the *Fasti*. He introduces the month of February by deriving it from the word *februum*, which we have already encountered as the goatskin of the Luperci. This purifying instrument embodies the idea of purification, which marks the month as a whole.⁷

februa Romani dixere piamina patres:
 nunc quoque dant verbo plurima signa fidem.
 pontifices ab rege petunt et flamine lanas,
 quis veterum lingua februa nomen erat,
 quaeque capit lictor domibus purgamina versis⁸
 torrida cum mica farra, vocantur idem.
 nomen idem ramo, qui caesus ab arbore pura
 casta sacerdotum tempora fronde tegit.
 ipse ego flaminicam poscentem februa vidi;
 februa poscenti pinea virga data est.
 denique quodcumque est quo corpora nostra piantur,
 hoc apud intonsos nomen habebat avos.
 mensis ab his dictus, secta quia pelle Luperci
 omne solum lustrant, idque piamen habent;
 aut quia placatis sunt tempora pura sepulcris,
 tum cum ferales praeteriere dies.

The Roman fathers called instruments of purification februa. Even now there are many signs that attest the meaning of the word. The priests ask the sacrificial king and the flamen for cloths of wool, which were named februa in

⁵ Their wording frequently reflects a binary relationship, p. 147, n. 70.

⁶ In chapter 2.2.

⁷ *F.* 2.19-34.

⁸ The last word of this line is disputed. I opt for Merkel's *versis*. For a discussion see Robinson 2011: 72-4.

the language of the ancients. When the homes are swept, whatever purifiers the lictor collects (in the form of toasted spelt with salt) are called by the same name. The same name is applied to the twig, which is cut from a pure tree and which covers the holy temples of priests with its leaves. I myself have seen the flaminica asking for februa, and at this request a twig of pine was given to her.

In short whatever it is with which our bodies are purified, had this name (februum) at the time of our bearded forefathers. The month is named after these, either because the Luperci purify the whole ground with cut skins (and regard this as a purification) or because it is a pure season when the tombs of the dead are placated, once the days of the dead have ended.

The passage is full of references to the religious language of purification: from repetition of the verb *piare* and its derivations to the use of *purus* and *castus*. As Lennon shows, these words are common in the terminology of purification.⁹ Particularly striking are their derivations, *piamen* and *purgamen*, which sound archaic and add antiquarian weight to the passage.¹⁰ The term *februum* appears as an unfamiliar archaism that Ovid needs to explain to his readers through numerous examples. In all cases, it is an instrument of purity, a sort of ‘purifier’.¹¹ The most patent type of *februum* is the goatskin of the Luperci who use the purifier to lustrate the whole ground (*omne solum*), i.e. the city.¹² The Lupercalia thus appears as an important ritual in the context of February, a month of purification. Many other sources convey similar ideas. Again, a close reading will reveal more details and help illuminate Ovid’s passage.

The most interesting account of February is that of Censorinus, a third-century AD scholar whose *De die natali* incorporates a rich miscellany of antiquarian lore. He shares Ovid’s language of purification while explaining *februum* generally, but differs from the poet in the specific case of the Lupercalia:¹³

Ianuarium ab Iano, cui adtributus est, nomen traxisse, Februarium a Februo. est februum quidquid piat purgatque et februamenta purgamenta, item februare purgare et purum facere. Februum autem non idem usquequaque dicitur; nam aliter in aliis sacris februaratur, hoc est purgatur. in hoc autem

⁹ 2014: 35-8.

¹⁰ See Robinson 2011: 69-70.

¹¹ Ovid’s examples present obscure and poorly attested rituals, some of which elicited several attempts at explanation (see Robinson 2011: 70-6).

¹² Ovid will repeat this idea again in *F.* 5.101-2: *semicaper, coleris cinctutis, Faune, Lupercis, cum lustrant celebres verbera secta vias.*

¹³ 22.13-15.

mense Lupercalibus, cum Roma lustratur, salem calidum ferunt, quod februum appellant, unde dies Lupercalium proprie februatus et ab eo porro mensis Februarius vocitatur.

The name of January is derived from Janus, to whom the month is dedicated, and that of February from februm. Februm is anything that appeases and purifies and 'februamenta' are purifiers, and thus, to februate means to purify and to make pure. However, februum does not always denote the same object. For in different rituals the februation, that is purification, occurs in different ways. In this month on the Lupercalia, when Rome is lustrated, they carry hot salt, which they call februm, by which the day of the Lupercalia is itself februated and from this day on the month is called February.

Censorinus uses the odd phrase 'hot salt' with reference to the *februum* at the Lupercalia. The use of salt for religious purification is widespread throughout the world,¹⁴ but how was it used on this day, and why is it 'hot'? Looking back to Ovid, one may observe that he also implies salt in the passage above (2.24) where an example of *februum* is *torrida cum mica farra* (lit. toasted spelt with a grain). One naturally asks the question: a grain of what? Although the word *salis* does not explicitly appear in the text, it is implied: toasted spelt, a common offering in Roman religion, is usually denoted with the phrase *mola salsa*, as salt was used with spelt to sprinkle on the head of sacrificial victims.¹⁵ We can see that Censorinus mentions the Lupercalia in his discussion of Roman months, which he draws from Varro, his favourite source.¹⁶ Nonius Marcellus also cites Varro when explaining the verb *februare* as the process of sprinkling sacrificial cakes with spelt.¹⁷ He does not name the festival (*sacris*) where this takes place, but the Lupercalia would be the obvious candidate in the context of February. Clear confirmation comes from Servius, who writes that the Vestals baked cakes of *mola salsa* on three days of the year: the Lupercalia, the Ides of September and the Vestalia.¹⁸

¹⁴ For comparative evidence see *ER* 13.23-4

¹⁵ Ovid probably shortened the expression *causa metri*, this offering being so common that readers would surmise it. The word *mica* itself is rarely found without a genitive specifying the substance (see Robinson 2011: *ad locum*). On sacrificial procedure see below, pp. 64-5.

¹⁶ See H.N. Parker 2007: 100-1.

¹⁷ Nonius (*De conpendiosa doctrina*, Lindsay 164, s.v. *februare*), *FEBRUARE positum pro purgare et purefacere. Varro de Vita populi Romani lib I: 'eorum enim sacris, liba cum sunt facta, incernere solent farris semine; ac dicere se ea februare id est pura facere.'*

¹⁸ *E.* 8.82: *sparge molam far et salem. hoc nomen de sacris tractum est: far enim pium, id est mola casta, salsa, utrumque enim idem significat, ita fit: virgines Vestales tres maximae ex nonis Maiis ad*

This information might provide a solution for the seeming oddity of Censorinus' 'hot salt'. Vestals baked cakes, and sprinkled them with salt while they were still hot.¹⁹ We cannot say if the Vestals simply performed the baking in the *atrium Vestae* (and passed the cakes on), or if they personally took part in the public part of the ritual. Neither Censorinus nor Nonius say who carried the spelt and the salt. One can only deplore the loss of their source, Varro, while noting that the spelt would normally be used in the sacrificial procedure at the festival.²⁰ In any case, Servius' connection with the Nones of September (the celebration of Jupiter's *Iudi Romani*) and the *Vestalia* places the day in the context of other great festivals. The fact that the Vestals played a role in the cultic proceedings of the day is certainly significant as this priesthood took part in the performance of the most important state cults, including other purifications such as the *Fordicidia* and the *Parilia*.²¹

We are beginning to see that the mysterious *februum* was not just the goatskin of the Luperci, but was applied to other purifiers as well. Dumézil claimed that only its application to the Lupercalia was the original one, and that all other instances were a later extension.²² This may well be true, but the interpretation is difficult to validate given that there are other (non-Lupercalian) instances of the word in the *Fasti*. Ovid uses the term in the context of other purifications at the beginning of February (as we have seen), and also at the *Parilia* when referring to the ashes of the calf and bean straws that are used in that ritual.²³ It would be difficult to prove that these are an extension of an original *februa* solely used at the Lupercalia. A more

pridie idus Maias, alternis diebus, spicas adareas in corbibus messuariis ponunt, easque spicas ipsae virgines torrent, pinsunt, molunt, atque ita molitum condunt. ex eo farre virgines ter in anno molam faciunt, Lupercalibus, Vestalibus, idibus septembribus, adiecto sale cocto et sale duro.

¹⁹ Fornacalia, a moveable festival of roasting grain was celebrated at about the same time (Scullard 1981: 73, Robinson 2011: 322-29). February thus appears to be a month of purification with undertones of fertility, and could in that sense be paralled with the month of Thargelion in Athens (see R. Parker 1996: 25-9).

²⁰ Which the Luperci performed, see p. 62 below.

²¹ See Wildfang 2006: 23-36, especially 28-30 where she shows that Vestals frequently produced substances used in other rituals related to grain.

²² Dumézil 1988: 183, n. 5.

²³ *Certe ego de vitulo cinerem stipulasque fabales /saepe tuli plena, februa tosta, manu* (F. 4.725-6). We are not expected to take the first person literally.

suspect instance appears in the context of the Lemuria, when Ovid jokingly refers to the Roman forefathers who in the old times did not yet know of the *februa* (as the month of February did not exist), but had expiated the tombs of their ancestors.²⁴ This association between *februa* as an instrument of purification and the cult of the dead brings us back to book two, where Ovid also makes a similar connection.

Februarius

At the end of the above passage Ovid relates *februa* to the etymology of February, but also gives an alternative reason for the name of the month: the placation of tombs, i.e. the dead. We shall see that a number of other sources consistently uphold this interpretation as well. The origin of the connection lies in the calendar. The commemoration of the dead, Parentalia (or *dies parentales*) stretches over eight days, starting from Faunus' festival on the Ides of February and ending with the Feralia (13th and the 21st day of the month, respectively), around a third of the month. This is a period of religious observance and remembrance when temples were closed and weddings prohibited.²⁵ The Parentalia thus conspicuously occupies the middle of the month of purification.²⁶ Lupercalia forms an essential part of this sacred time of the commemoration. This is why the ancient authors consistently refer to both purification and ancestor worship when they discuss February. The earliest attestation comes from Varro:²⁷

Dehinc quintus Quintilis et sic deinceps usque ad Decembrem a numero. ad hos qui additi, prior a principe deo Ianuarius appellatus; posterior, ut idem dicunt scriptores, ab diis inferis Februarius appellatus, quod tum his paren<te>tur; ego magis arbitror Februarium a die februato, quod tum

²⁴ *nec adhuc pia februa norant... iam tamen extincto cineri sua dona ferebant* (F. 5.423-6).

²⁵ F. 2.577-64. See Lennon 2014: 158-61 (with references). Ioannes Lydus (*Mens.* 4.25) says that temples were purified.

²⁶ The relative position of the Lupercalia and length of the Parentalia (compared to the rest of the month) would depend on the length of a Republican February. Every two years, an intercalary month was added after 23 or 24 February, in which case the last five days of the month would lapse (Rüpke 2011: 40).

²⁷ *Ling.* 6.34.

februatur populus, id est lupercis nudis lustratur antiquum oppidum Palatinum gregibus humanis cinctum.

Therefore the fifth month is called Quintilis and so all the others up to December by their respective number. As to the months which were added to these, the first was called Ianuarius from the first god; the following one, as the writers say in the same way, Februarius from the gods of the underworld, as they are then placated. I am more of the opinion that February received its name from the februated day, for the people is februated on that day, i.e. the naked Luperci lustrate the ancient city of Palatine, encircled by groups of people.

Like Ovid, Varro wavers between two alternative explanations of the origin of February. He has inherited the derivation from the gods of the underworld from Iunius Gracchanus (2nd century BC),²⁸ but he prefers to link it to the lustration ritual of the Luperci, which happens on a day called *dies Februatus* ('the purified day'), an alternative name for the Lupercalia. The fact that the people encircle the Palatine supports Varro's point that this is a ritual of lustration, as they regularly involve circumambulation.²⁹ He had already broached the subject earlier in the same book of *De Lingua Latina* using the hapax *februatio* to characterise the Lupercalia as a purification:³⁰

Lupercalia dicta, quod in Lupercali Luperci sacra faciunt. rex cum ferias menstruas nonis februariis edicit, hunc diem februatam appellat; februm Sabini purgamentum, et id in sacris nostris verbum: nam et Lupercalia februatio, ut in antiquitatum libris demonstravi.

Lupercalia is so called because the Luperci offer sacrifices in the Lupercal. When the king on the Nones of February announces the holidays of that month, he calls this the februated day. The Sabines said 'februm' to denote the means of purification, and this is the word in our rituals as well; for the Lupercalia is a 'februatio', as I have demonstrated in my Antiquities.

Varro's reference to his lost books of the *Antiquities* can only be traced to a brief mention in Augustine, which provides no new information.³¹ However, from this

²⁸ The phrase *ut idem dicunt scriptores* refers to the two authors Varro had mentioned in the previous passage (*Ling.* 6.33; Funaioli 1907: 16-17): Fulvius Nobilior set up a calendar in the temple of Hercules Musarum and Gracchanus wrote a commentary on it (see Rüpke 2011: 87-108).

²⁹ See chapter 2.2.

³⁰ *Ling.* 6.13.

³¹ *Ant.* Cardauns fr. 231=Aug. *C. D.* 7.18: *Ideo Terminalia eodem mense Februario celebrari dicunt, cum fit sacrum purgatorium, quod vocant Februm, unde mensis nomen accepit. Febru(u)m* here becomes a kind of synecdoche for the festival as a whole. This is echoed in Aug. *c. Faustum* 18.5: *Porro Ianuarius a Iano appellatus est, Februarius a Februis sacris Lupercorum.* Ausonius (*Eclogae* 14.1-2): *Primus Romanas ordiris, lane, kalendas/ Februa vicino mense Numa instituit.*

passage we learn that *dies februatus* was a term used by the *rex sacrificulus* when orally announcing the festivals of the month on the Nones, according to an ancient custom that most likely predates the written calendar.³² A number of other sources also make the connection between purification and the cult of the dead, from Cicero in *De Legibus*³³ to Plutarch (as many as four times),³⁴ who is clearly drawing on earlier authors, as indicated by his repetition of Varro's *dies Februatus* for the Lupercalia.³⁵ The same conception of February can be gathered from Festus' entry on the month (discussed in the previous sub-chapter), which is replete with the language of purification.³⁶

To summarize the above sources, they see February as a month of purification and ancestor worship. They choose to derive its name from *februum*, or its derivation *dies Februatus*, which singles out the Lupercalia as a lustration ritual that occurs in the middle of the month and thus marks it as a whole, as in the illustration from the Thysdrus mosaic calendar. The process of etymological derivation reflects an interaction with Greek literature, but is also an attempt to systematise Roman religion and the ritual calendar by placing it in a wider cultural framework.³⁷ The easiest derivation of February is the religious term *februum*, which is in turn derived from concepts that make sense in the wider context of February, mainly purification.³⁸

Modern historical linguists seem to echo the sentiment of the sources when trying to link *februum* with smoking instruments of purification,³⁹ but the origins

³² See Rüpke 2011: 53-4.

³³ 2.55, in the context of *feriae denicales* (from *deni* = ten each), a period of nine days of purification observed by a family upon the death of a member. It seems that the Parentalia was a public equivalent of this private observance.

³⁴ *Num.* 19.5; *Quaest. Rom.* 19, 68, 111. Dionysius of Halicarnassus also notes the purificatory aspect of the Lupercalia (1.80.1-2): ...τοῦτο δὲ καθαροῦν τινα τῶν κομητῶν πάτριον ἐδύνατο, ὡς καὶ νῦν ἔτι δοῖται.

³⁵ *Plut. Rom.* 21.3: ...τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην τὸ παλαιὸν ἐκάλουν Φεβράτιον.

³⁶ *Paul. Fest.* 75L, p. 21-2.

³⁷ See Rüpke 2012 and below p. 48.

³⁸ But also mourning (for the dead) *Labeo* in *Ioannes Lydus (Mens.* 4.20) (see below). For *Servius* it is only a word for the skin of the he-goat (*Aen.* 8.343): *nam pellem ipsam capri veteres februm vocabant.*

³⁹ *Walde and Hofmann* (1938: 472, s.v. *februum*) propose it meant 'smoking', in connection with Homeric *θέειον* (sulphur) and the verb *θύω* (to offer sacrifice). The former word refers to the sulphur,

remain disputed.⁴⁰ Recently, de Vaan has proposed a derivation from the same Indo-European root as Latin *febris* ('fever'), which comes from PIE root *d^heg^{wh}* (burn).⁴¹ This would nicely fit Ovid's burning *februa* at the Parilia, the hot cakes of the Vestals, as well as comparable purifications that involve burning or smoke.⁴² Whatever the case may be, the connection of *februum* with the Lupercalia is very old, as Varro informs us that the day was called *februatus* by the rex. However, not everyone found this ancient appellation satisfactory, and a number of sources derive February from *deus Februus*.

Deus Februus

Ioannes Lydus, a sixth-century Byzantine author wrote his work *On the Months* in the age of Justinian. He presents us with a wealth of materials collected from numerous ancient sources. The beginning of his interpretation of February echoes the information found in Festus:⁴³

Τῷ Φεβρουαρίῳ μηνὶ ἀπὸ Φεβρούας θεᾶς οὕτω προσαγορευομένης τὸ ὄνομα γέγονεν· Φεβρούαν δὲ θεᾶν ἔφορον καὶ καθαρτικὴν τῶν πραγμάτων οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι παρέλαβον. Ἄνυσιος δὲ ἐν τῷ περὶ μηνῶν Φεβροῦον τὸν καταχθόνιον εἶναι τῇ Θούσκων φωνῇ λέγει, θεραπεύεσθαι δὲ πρὸς τῶν Λουπερκῶν ὑπὲρ ἐπιδόσεως τῶν καρπῶν. ὁ δὲ Λαβεῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ πένθους λέγει κληθῆναι τὸν Φεβρουάριον· φέβεο γὰρ παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις τὸ πένθος προσαγορεύεται· κατ' αὐτὸν δὲ τοὺς κατοικομένους ἐτίμων· ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ φεβρουάρε τὸ καθᾶραι τὰ ποντιφικάλια βιβλία καλεῖ, Φέβρον τὸν Πλούτωνα.

The name of the month of February originated from the goddess Februa, which is so called. The Romans took Februa to be the goddess overseeing and purifying things. In his book 'On the Months' Anysius says that 'Februum' means the one under the ground in the language of the Etruscans, and that it is performed by the Luperci for the increase of the fruits. Labeo claims that Februarius is called after mourning. For the Romans say 'feber' for mourning.

which Odysseus uses (with fire) to purify his home (*Od.* 22.480-94). Ernout and Meillet (1979: s.v. *februus*, 222-3) conclude the word has no clear Indo-European origin.

⁴⁰ Dumézil's (1929, 1988: 31-2) early attempt to connect it with the Sanskrit *gandharva* failed miserably and he later retracted the hypothesis.

⁴¹ See de Vaan 2008: 208. *Febris* was also a goddess, but her cult is too poorly attested to warrant a connection. A number of sources mention in passing that she had an ancient Palatine temple. Only Valerius Maximus lists two others in Rome (*Val. Max.* 2.5.6). See Themann-Steinke 2008: *ad loc.*

⁴² Such as the Umbrian rituals attested on the *Tabulae Iguvinae* (Weiss 2010: 220-8).

⁴³ *Lyd. Mens.* 4.25.

In it (Februarius) they commemorated the dead; and indeed the pontifical books call purifying 'februare', and Pluto 'Februm'.

One can observe how Ioannes Lydus contradicts himself in this passage by initially deriving February from the goddess Februa, and then, ending with the familiar note on the commemoration of the dead and purification, cites the authority of the pontifical books where the divinity is in the masculine gender, Februus and denotes the god of the dead. This is not surprising as the author collected different information from various sources and did not always attempt to unify them. Later in the same passage, Lydus conflates the ancient appellation of the Lupercalia 'Φεβρουάτος' with the month as a whole (Φεβρουάριος). It was difficult for a Byzantine bureaucrat to understand an ancient religion that was practised in a considerably different space and time.⁴⁴

However, Lydus clearly picks up on earlier sources for Roman religion and their views on February. His derivation from the god Februus can also be found in a number of other late authors who are confused as to his identity and attempt to identify him with Dis.⁴⁵ This speculation is an end result of a long process of systematisation, which had begun much earlier in the Republic (where Lydus' reference to pontifical books would take us),⁴⁶ and which sought to systematise various forms of knowledge, particularly the calendar.⁴⁷ As we have learnt from Varro, six months have a clear numerical derivation (from Quintilis to December), and some of the other six were named after gods. January and March are clearly derived from Janus and Mars, but others could be made to fit various gods. *Iunius* was related to Juno and *Maius* to Maia, but it took some stretching to derive *Aprilis* from Aphrodite as the Greek equivalent of Venus.⁴⁸ In order to complete the system, the first six months needed to be explained in terms of divine names so that they parallel

⁴⁴ On Lydus' relationship to his past and present see Maas 1992.

⁴⁵ Based on the connection with the underworld. Serv. *G.* 1.43; Isid. 33.4; Macr. *Sat.* 1.13.3.

⁴⁶ Lydus' confusion in other matters prevents from taking this for granted. The books were records kept by the *pontifices* (see *FRHist* 1.141-59).

⁴⁷ On this process see Rüpke (2012) who prefers the term 'rationalization'.

⁴⁸ There were alternative etymologies for the months, of course. See Maltby 1991: s.v.

the six numerical names in the other half.⁴⁹ By a process of analogy April and February received divine patrons: the former was tied to a Greek name of a similar sound, and a personification was devised for the latter. If all its neighbours have their gods, why not February? Februs thus always appears in the context of this month and reflects its characteristics: purification and the underworld.

A clear confirmation of my hypothesis comes from the account of pope Gelasius, by which point Februs becomes simply *deus Februarius*,⁵⁰ ('February god'), thus blending the name of the god and the month. However, the bishop's description of the god as a monstrous half-man, half-beast betrays an identification with Faunus.⁵¹ It would seem that Februs started as a savants' construct to explain the name of the month, but then became identified with the only cult divinity to which this name could be applied in public ritual—Faunus. It becomes an epithet of the god.

Faunus has both of the traits of Februs (and February): he was the god of the lustration of the Lupercalia, but his many conceptual areas also included the underworld. On the Ides of February, two days before the Lupercalia, the Vestal Virgin offered sacrifice to the dead, starting the period of the Parentalia.⁵² It can barely be accidental that this date coincides with the anniversary of Faunus' temple on the Tiber island,⁵³ as the god's chthonic side is otherwise noted.⁵⁴ Horace's commentator Porphyry, whose work is dated to the early third century, calls him a god of the underworld and of plague,⁵⁵ tracing this back to Vergil's *Aeneid*. In book seven, Vergil has king Latinus seek the prophecy of his father Faunus in a grove, where a stream exhales pestilent vapours.⁵⁶ Latinus converses with the underworld

⁴⁹ Rüpke 2011: 23.

⁵⁰ Gel. 11: *illo tempore deo Februario minime litabatur...?* With reference to the past of the festival (Gel. 3): *non pavescat ideo morbos gigni quia daemonia non colantur et deo Februario non litetur, ei deo ubi haec deliramenta compererit.*

⁵¹ *...digni qui monstrum nescio quod pecudis hominisque mixtura compositum sive vere sive false editum celebretis?* (23)

⁵² See Robinson 2011: 354-5, Salzman 2002: 243-4.

⁵³ Liv. 33.42.10; Ov. *F.* 2.193-4; Vitruv. *Arch.* 3.2.3.

⁵⁴ See now D'Alessio 2013: 121-8. Further discussion of Faunus in chapter 3.2.

⁵⁵ *inferum ac pestilentem deum esse* (Porph. 3.18).

⁵⁶ Virg. *Aen.* 7.81-101.

through the chthonic and prophetic powers of Faunus, who resides in the ground, according to Servius.⁵⁷ This brings us back to Lydus' citation of Anysius (an unidentified author),⁵⁸ who apparently claimed 'februm' was an Etruscan word for the underworld, worshipped by the Luperci for an increase of fruits. This confused account was very welcome to Frazer as a confirmation of the connection between the fertility of the soil and the people.⁵⁹ One can hardly venture this far based on dubious evidence, but Anysius' idea is probably an exaggeration of a connection between the aspects of purification and fertility, which are combined in the Lupercalia.

In this chapter we have seen that a great number of sources classify the festival as a purification ritual. It is nested in the larger calendrical complex of the Parentalia, which combines purification with ancestor worship, and marks February as a whole. A close reading of the sources reveals that the Vestals baked sacrificial cakes, which were also classified as *februa*, along with many other purifying materials. This purificatory aspect was so relevant that the *rex* announced the Lupercalia as *dies februatus*, which again underlies its importance in relation to the month. Finally, this relationship produced another epithet for Faunus, Februus (or Februarius), through etymological play and the process of calendar systematisation.

⁵⁷ *Aen.* 7.91.

⁵⁸ The prosopography of the Later Roman Empire records three men with this name (Martindale 1980: 2.108). It is unclear if any one of them wrote 'On the Months'.

⁵⁹ Frazer 1929: 2.332.

1.3 Wolf, Cattle Raids and the Foundation Myth

One of the least conspicuous aspects of the Lupercalia is its connection to the wolf. This subject was discussed by many German scholars in the 20th century, but failed to attract much attention amongst classicists in recent decades. I shall turn to these comparative studies in section three,¹ but here I present the sources that relate the festival to the Roman foundation myth² and its wolf mythology.

The very name of the festival must be ultimately derived from the word *lupus*. Scholars disagree on the exact formation of ‘Lupercalia’, but most derive it either from *lupus* and *arcere* (to ward off),³ or from the root *lup-* and the suffix *-erca*,⁴ otherwise operative only in *noverca*.⁵ Grüber’s attractive hypothesis sees Lupercus as a compound of *lupus* and *sequere*, which would make Luperci followers of the wolf.⁶ I leave it to the pundits to resolve this linguistic conundrum, while noting that the dispute only concerns the second part of the word. The first part is evidently derived from *lupus*, a word with clear Indo-European cognates, such as English ‘wolf’, Greek *λύκος*, Sk. *vṛkas*, OCS *вѣлкѣ*.⁷

¹ Especially chapter 3.1.

² The term foundation myth is here used to refer to the mythology of Romulus and Remus (and foundation of the city). I am aware that the Romans told other stories about the foundation, such as the myths of Aeneas and Evander, discussed in the next chapter.

³ This interpretation is based on Servius *Aen.* 8.343: *ergo ideo et Euander deo gentis suae sacravit locum et nominavit lupercal, quod praesidio ipsius numinis lupi a pecudibus arcerentur*. It was advocated by many 20th century scholars: Deubner 1910: 488; Wissowa 1912: 209; Franklin 1921: 37. Several linguistic authorities hold this etymology untenable: see Walde and Hofmann; Ernout and Meillet s.v. *Lupercus*; Gruber 1963: 273. They also discuss the untenable derivation from *lupus* and *hircus*.

⁴ For an overview of bibliography see Ulf 1982: 13-25.

⁵ According to Arnobius, Varro mentions a goddess Luperca, a personification of the she-wolf: *Quod abiectis infantibus pepercit lupa non mitis, Luperca, inquit, dea est auctore appellata Varrone* (4.3). Lactantius also writes: *Romuli nutrix Lupa honoribus est adfecta divinis* (1.20.1). Nothing is known about her cult in Rome, if it existed at all.

⁶ Grüber 1963: 273-6.

⁷ See de Vaan 2008: 353. Historical linguists usually cite *lupus* with *bos* as Sabellic borrowings into Latin because one would expect the Indo-European labiovelar (*k^w*) to be retained here (**luk^wo-*). However, as de Vaan observes, and as Dumézil noted (1944: 143) names of predatory animals are often distorted or completely changed for reasons of taboo. A comparable linguistic case is provided by Old Irish *olc* (meaning ‘wolf’, ‘evil’), also best derived from PIE **wĺk^wos* (wolf) although the derivation does not tally with phonetic laws (See McCone 1985: 171-6). Compare the similar taboos on bear (Gamkrelidze-Ivanov 1995: 418-20) and fox (Sauzeau 2013, n.5) in Indo-European traditions.

Numerous ancient sources also associated the Lupercalia with *lupus/lupa*.⁸ The Greek sources render the Lupercalia as Λύκαια⁹ and Plutarch explicitly gives a simple reason for this translation: λύκος μὲν ὁ λοῦπὸς ἐστὶ καὶ Λύκαια τὰ Λουπεργάλια.¹⁰ He reiterates the appellation in *The Life of Romulus*:¹¹

τοῦνομα δὲ τῆς ἑορτῆς ἑλληνιστὶ σημαίνει Λύκαια, καὶ δοκεῖ διὰ τοῦτο παμπάλαιος ἀπ' Ἀρκάδων εἶναι τῶν περὶ Εὐάνδρον. ἀλλὰ τοῦτο μὲν κοινὸν ἐστὶ· δύνανται γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς λυκαίνης γεγονέναι τοῦνομα.

The name of the festival means Λύκαια in Greek, and because of that it appears that it is very ancient, coming from the Arcadians who followed Evander. But this is the general opinion: the name could come from the she-wolf.

Augustine, citing Varro as his source, also connects the Lupercalia to the wolf and Arcadia, where mysteries of ritual lycanthropy would take place.¹² There is no reason to doubt that Augustine's reference is valid.¹³ However, in Varro's extant work, when he gives the reasons for the names of Roman priestly orders, coming to the Luperci, he only offers a circular explanation: *Luperci, quod Lupercalibus in Lupercali sacra faciunt*.¹⁴ He repeats this tautology a little further in the same work: *Lupercalia dicta quod in Lupercali Luperci sacra faciunt*.¹⁵

However circular, Varro's definition is helpful as it points to the inseparable connection between the Lupercalia and Lupercal, which is apparent both in their very name and in the mythological tradition. Ovid also explicitly connects the cave and the festival.¹⁶ After narrating the famous story of the birth of the twins and their nursing

⁸ Quintilian cites a different etymology which he rightly disproves: *et inveniuntur qui 'Lupercalia' aequae tris partes orationis esse contendunt quasi 'luere per caprum'* (*Inst. Orat.* 1.5.66-7). Servius implies a similar derivation (*Aen.* 8.343): *...Lupercal sub monte Palatino est quaedam spelunca, in qua de capro luebatur id est sacrificabatur: unde et lupercal non nulli dictum putant.*

⁹ Lupercal is Λύκαλον. Besides Plutarch see also Dion. Hal. 1.32.3, 80.1.

¹⁰ *Quaes. Rom.* 61.

¹¹ *Rom.* 21.3-4.

¹² *Lupus enim graece λύκος dicitur, unde Lycaei nomen apparet inflexum. Romanos etiam Lupercos ex illorum mysteriorum veluti semine dicit exortos* (*C. D.* 18.17 = Fraccaro fr. 29).

¹³ As Varro refers to Evander in his extant work (*Ling.* 5.21). For discussion of the Arcadian connection see the next chapter.

¹⁴ *Ling.* 5.85. Quite possibly Varro elaborated on this in book two of his lost *Antiquities* (*Liber de pontificibus*). See Cardauns fr. IIa.

¹⁵ *Ling.* 6.33.

¹⁶ *forsitan et quaeras cur sit locus ille Lupercal/ quaeve diem tali nomine causa notet* (*F.* 2.381-2).

by the she-wolf,¹⁷ he concludes by deriving the priests (Luperci) and the cave (Lupercal) from the she-wolf (*lupa*).¹⁸

Aside from the learned and circular etymological play, the foundation myth and the festival are bound by conceptual terms, not least the reality of the Lupercal. This is the cave from which the running ritual began and where, according to Varro, the Luperci offered sacrifice.¹⁹ The cave lies at the southwestern foot of the Palatine, and this is where Ovid locates the she-wolf nursing the twins.²⁰ Other sources also place the events of the foundation myth at the Lupercal.²¹ Vergil famously imagines the she-wolf in the Lupercal, which he calls the cave of Mars.²² Wolf is the animal totem of Mars, the father of the twins Romulus and Remus, and the she-wolf symbolically takes the place of their mother in the most widely known story in Roman mythology. As we shall see in the topography chapter, the Lupercal is an essential part of a Palatine spatial complex that commemorates the foundation myth.²³ This places the festival within a wider mythological cycle that informed the creation of Roman identity and historical consciousness.

The foundation myth and the mythology of the Lupercalia overlap to some extent. Aetiological myths purporting to explain the origin of the festival consistently represent the life of the twins prior to the founding of the city. As Rodriguez-Mayorgas argues, this connection casts the ritual in the framework of the foundation myth and thus gives it a key role in Roman cultural memory.²⁴ Seeing the young Luperci run, one recalled the youth of Romulus and Remus, for the myths portrayed

¹⁷ *F.* 2.383-420.

¹⁸ *illa loco nomen fecit, locus ipse Lupercis/ magna dati nutrix praemia lactis habet* (*F.* 2.421-2)

¹⁹ Also, according to other sources, see pp. 112/13, n. 3.

²⁰ Servius also offers this as an alternative reason for the name of the place: *...unde et lupercal non nulli dictum putant. alii quod illic lupa Remum et Romulum nutrierit* (*Aen.* 8.343), and Pliny supports this view: *nutrix Romuli ac Remi, conditores imperii in Lupercali prima protexit...* (*HN.* 15.77).

²¹ With some variation (see Robinson 2011: 275).

²² Verg. *Aen.* 8.630-1: *fecerat et viridi fetam Mavortis in antro /procubuisse lupam*; Serv. *ad loc.*: *MAVORTIS IN ANTRO potest accipi et 'fecerat lupam Mavortis' et 'Mavortis in antro'. Fabius 'spelunca Martis' dixit.*

²³ See pp. 114-6.

²⁴ Rodriguez-Mayorgas 2010: 98-9.

the twins as the founders of the ritual. One of the most salient and controversial versions of this myth is given by Ovid:²⁵

Adde peregrinis causas, mea Musa, Latinas,
inque suo noster pulvere currat equus.
Cornipedi Fauno caesa de more capella
venit ad exiguas turba vocata dapes.
Dumque sacerdotes veribus transsuta salignis
exta parant medias sole tenente vias,
Romulus et frater pastoralisque iuventus
solibus et campo corpora nuda dabant;
vectibus et iaculis et missi pondere saxi
bracchia per lusus experienda dabant:
pastor ab excelso 'per devia rura iuencos,
Romule, praedones, et Reme', dixit 'agunt'.
Longum erat armari; diversis exit uterque
partibus, occursu praeda recepta Remi.
Ut rediit, veribus stridentia detrahit exta
atque ait 'haec certe non nisi victor edet'.
Dicta facit Fabiique simul; venit inritus illuc
Romulus et mensas ossaque nuda videt;
risit et indoluit Fabios potuisse Remumque
vincere, Quintilios non potuisse suos.
Fama manet facti: posito velamine currunt,
et memorem famam, quod bene cessit, habet.

My Muse, add to foreign reasons Latin ones, and let our horse run in his own dust. When the she-goat was sacrificed to the horn-footed Faunus, a crowd was invited and came to the small feast. While the priests were preparing the innards stuck on willow spits and the sun was in the middle of the sky, Romulus and his brother and the pastoral youth were exposing their naked bodies to sunshine and exercise. They tried their hands in sports with crowbars and spears and with the weight of a throwing stone. Then a shepherd from a height shouted: 'Romulus and Remus, robbers are driving off the bullocks across the pathless country.' It would have taken them a long time to arm themselves; each one went in a different direction; Remus encountered the robbers and captured the booty. When he returned, he drew the hissing innards from the spits and said: 'Certainly, no one will eat this but the winner.' He did as he said and the Fabii with him. Romulus came there disappointed and saw the tables and the bones bare. He laughed and grieved that the Fabii and Remus could win, and his own Quintilii could not. The fame of the deed remains: they run without clothes, and that success holds lasting fame.

While Ovid's other aetiological myth for the Lupercalia made Romulus the founder of the fertility ritual,²⁶ here we have both twins competing to restore lost cattle. The

²⁵ O. F. 2.359-80.

²⁶ Fast. 2.425-52, discussed in 1.1, pp. 18-28.

ritual facts this myth tries to explain refer to the duality of the Luperci and their nudity. However, the restoration of cattle is a feature not to be ignored. Thus, three elements stand out from Ovid's aetiological myth: duality, nudity and the recovery of cattle. Comparing Ovid's account with the ritual and other versions of the myth will help elucidate these and other elements and trace their background.

Ovid's myth reflects the duality of the Luperci through the competition of the twins, which end with the controversial and unexpected victory of Remus, who is usually represented as the weaker brother.²⁷ In the ritual, the Luperci were divided into two groups. The names vary slightly in the sources,²⁸ but the two *gentes* being referred to are Fabii and Quintilii,²⁹ and it is not impossible that the Luperci had been drawn from only these two *gentes* at some point in the prehistory of the festival.³⁰ This was certainly no longer the case in the historical period.³¹ To my knowledge, no one seems to have noticed that the three inscriptions that mention group membership invariably refer to either a Fabianus or a Quinctialis. The adjectives imply that new members were assigned to either of the two groups so that an individual was either a Fabian or a Quinctian Lupercus.³² The competition in Ovid's myth corresponds to this duality in the ritual.³³

²⁷ Much ink has been spilled over this. See Robinson 2011: 251 (with references). I discuss this further in 3.1.4.

²⁸ Corsano (1977: 138, n. 3) observes that Quintilii and Fabii are preferred by the literary sources, as in Ovid above; *Origo gentis Romanae* 22.1; Prop. 4.1a.26. Festus has *FAVIANI et QUINTILIANI appellabantur Luperci, a Favio et Quintilio praepositis suis* (Paul. Fest. 78L, s. v. *Faviani*), and again in a damaged passage (308L): *Luperci... Quinctili<ani>*.

²⁹ With the exception of an imperial inscription referring to Quinctialis (see n. 32 below), which would imply *gens Quin(c)tilia*, not *Quin(c)tilia*. For these *gentes* see C.J. Smith 2006: index, s.v.

³⁰ Many *gentes* had their own ritual traditions (see C.J. Smith 2006: 44-50). Mommsen argued that only *gens Fabia* and *Quinctia* had used the *praenomen* Kaeso (which he derived from *caedere*, the beating of the Luperci), but this was subsequently disputed. See Corsano 1977: 138-9, fn. 3; Ferriès 2009: 375, fn. 12.

³¹ See pp. 106, 161.

³² M. Stlaccius is a <*Lupercu*>*s Fabianus* (CIL VI 33 421) and *Q. Considius Ero<s>* (CIL VI 1933) *Quinctial<is>*. The practice continues into the Empire: *Q. Veturius... Pexsus Lupercus Fabianus* (CIL XI 3205). The obvious objection is that three might not be statistically relevant. But unlike the literary sources (who give mythical accounts) Festus divides the Luperci into Faviani and Quintiliani in the context of the ritual (see n. 28 above). This would imply a derivation from *gens Quinctilia*, not *Quinctia* as some form of confusion may have arisen between the two gentilicial names of similar sound.

³³ This is frequently compared to similar mythical sibling rivalries, such as the foundation augury for the location of the future city, but also the case of the Potitii and Pinarii, who officiated in the cult of Hercules at *Ara Maxima* (Frazer 2.213-5; Robinson 2011: 260). But there are also significant differences (see North 2008: 154).

Servius relates a similar myth in a shorter form stressing the elements of nudity and cattle, while duality is conspicuously absent:³⁴

In huius similitudinem intecti cultores eius: cui Lupercalia instituta sunt, quia deus pastoralis est. nam Remum et Romulum ante urbem conditam Lupercalia celebrasse eo quod quodam tempore nuntiatum illis sit latrones pecus illorum abigere: illos togis positis cucurrisse caesisque obviis pecus recuperasse: id in morem versum, ut hodieque nudi currant.

His worshippers are uncovered in imitation of the god (Pan): it was for him that the Lupercalia was instituted, because he is a pastoral deity. For Remus and Romulus celebrated the Lupercalia before the city was founded because at one time it was reported to them that robbers were stealing their cattle. Having left their togas they ran, killed the enemies and recovered their cattle. This was turned into a custom, so that today they run naked.

The cursory manner in which Servius relates the myth implies that this is a summary of an earlier source, either Ovid or another source they both drew on.³⁵ Later in his commentary, Servius retells this myth in a similar fashion to explain Vergil's phrase *nudosque Lupercos* in the poet's description of the shield of Aeneas.³⁶

Duality is also completely absent from Plutarch's citation of Gaius Acilius, a second century BC senator and historian whose work is lost. Remus is not even mentioned by name, although his presence can be inferred:³⁷

Γάιος δ' Ἀκίλιος ιστορεῖ πρὸ τῆς κτίσεως τὰ θρέμματα τῶν περὶ τὸν Ῥωμόλον ἀφανῆ γενέσθαι· τοὺς δὲ τῷ Φαύνῳ προσευξαμένους ἐκδραμεῖν γυμνοὺς ἐπὶ τὴν ζήτησιν, ὅπως ὑπὸ τοῦ ἰδρώτος μὴ ἐνοχλοῖντο· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο γυμνοὺς περιτρέχειν τοὺς Λουπέρκους.

Gaius Acilius narrates that before the founding (of the city) the cattle of Romulus and his followers disappeared. After praying to Faunus they ran to search for them naked so that they would not be impaired by sweat. And that is why the Luperci run naked.

Again the summary form of exposition prevents our drawing substantial conclusions: it is difficult to see whether Ovid and Servius also drew from Gaius Acilius, as here a prayer (not a sacrifice) is offered to Faunus for the very purpose of recovering lost cattle, and the nudity is explained by avoiding sweat, not by lack of time, as Ovid would have it. However, these are minor differences and the different versions share

³⁴ Serv. *Aen.* 8.343.

³⁵ See pp. 31-2.

³⁶ *Aen.* 8.663.

³⁷ *Rom.* 21.9, *FRHist* 2.275, 3.185.

fundamental similarities. Thus, considering all three accounts, this aetiological myth of the Lupercalia has the following basic elements: nakedness, worship of Faunus, cattle raid, with duality/competition stressed in Ovid's account.

The cattle raid is the most striking of these basic elements. If one were to invent an aetiological myth to explain the ritual of the Lupercalia, it is easy to see why one would include the duality, nudity, and the god of the festival. All these elements are plainly visible in the ritual itself, but a cattle raid is not, and one can hardly imagine it being performed in the midst of the city in the historical period. This element also appears in the foundation myth. The main sources on the pastoral youth of the twins all report on their leadership of other shepherds, often including excursions for recovering lost cattle. We find this in Livy's account of the twins' youth, in the period between their adoption by Faustulus and victory over Amulius:³⁸

Ita geniti itaque educati, cum primum adoleuit aetas, nec in stabulis nec ad pecora segnes uenando peragrare saltus. hinc robore corporibus animisque sumpto iam non feras tantum subsistere sed in latrones praeda onustos impetus facere pastoribusque rapta diuidere et cum his crescente in dies grege iuuenum seria ac iocos celebrare.

Born and raised in this way, as soon as they were of mature age, not being idle in farmstead and cattle, they also roamed the forests in hunting. Having increased their strength in both mind and body, they not only made their stand against wild beasts, but attacked robbers laden with spoils and divided up among the shepherds what they had obtained, and they shared with these both grave and light matters alike as their group of young men was daily increasing.

Hunting and cattle rustling are the main activities of the twins.³⁹ Roman tradition presents it as common practice, and Ovid follows it in book three of the *Fasti* specifying that the twins were eighteen years of age when they started on such pursuits.⁴⁰

Similar accounts can be found in Greek sources, which give more detail. Plutarch describes their youth first in general terms, as he enumerates exercise, hunting, running, driving off robbers, capturing thieves, and rescuing those in need as

³⁸ Liv. 1.4.8-9.

³⁹ For *subsistere feras*, compare an episode in Vergil (*Aen.* 11.677-89). Camilla kills Ornytus, a warrior without armour, but carrying a wolfcap. She asks: *silvis te, Tyrrhene, feras agitare putasti?* The wolf was chasing beasts in the forest.

⁴⁰ *F.* 3.59-64. See also Dion. Hal. 79.1. This is significant, as we shall see in chapter 3.1.

activities the young twins were famous for.⁴¹ He then relates how they led groups of poor men and slaves, and clashed with the herdsmen of Numitor, taking away some of their cattle.⁴² Plutarch's verb ἀποτέμνονται (to cut off, take away) is a clear indication of theft. Naturally, the twins would not simply take cattle from robbers, but were themselves the robbers at times, going on cattle raids. Barchiesi proposes that this is also the idea behind Ovid's choice of words in the shepherd's address: *Romule, praedones, et Reme...*⁴³ The poet's condensed account leaves plenty of room for ambivalence when it comes to the identity of the robbers.

Other than Plutarch's, we also have a more detailed account by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who explicitly stresses the violence in the twins' altercation with Numitor's herdsmen. He specifies cattle and pasture as the primary reasons for conflicts, in which the twins killed and wounded some of the herdsmen.⁴⁴ He then offers two versions of the way they exacted revenge against the twins, capturing Remus in the process.⁴⁵ The first version corresponds to Plutarch's account in *Life of Romulus*, stating that Remus was ambushed and overtaken by a superior force of Numitor's herdsmen.⁴⁶ The second version is of greater interest to us as it has the brothers performing the Lupercalia at the very moment when Numitor's men suddenly ambushed them:⁴⁷

Ὡς δὲ Τουβέρων Αἴλιος δεινὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ περὶ τὴν συναγωγὴν τῆς ἱστορίας ἐπιμελὴς γράφει, προειδότες οἱ τοῦ Νεμέτορος θύσοντας τὰ Λύκαια τοὺς νεανίσκους τῷ Πανὶ τὴν Ἀρκαδικὴν ὡς Εὐάνδρος κατεστήσατο θυσίαν ἐνήδρευσαν τὸν καιρὸν ἐκείνον τῆς ἱεροουργίας, ἥνικα χρῆν τοὺς περὶ τὸ Παλλάντιον οἰκοῦντας τῶν νέων ἐκ τοῦ Λυκαίου τεθυκότας περιελθεῖν δρόμῳ τὴν κώμην γυμνοὺς ὑπεζωσμένους τὴν αἰδῶ ταῖς δοραῖς τῶν νεοθύτων. τοῦτο δὲ καθαρόν τινα τῶν κωμητῶν πάτριον ἐδύνατο, ὡς καὶ νῦν ἐτι δρᾶται. ἐν δὴ τούτῳ τῷ χρόνῳ τοὺς ἱεροποιοὺς νεανίσκους οἱ βουκόλοι λοχῆσαντες κατὰ τὸ στενόπορον τῆς ὁδοῦ, ἐπειδὴ τὸ πρῶτον τάγμα τὸ σὺν τῷ Ῥέμῳ κατ' αὐτοὺς ἐγένετο, τῶν ἀμφὶ Ῥωμύλον τε καὶ ἄλλων ὑστεριζόντων

⁴¹ *Rom.* 6.3. Full citations of all these sources would take far too much space.

⁴² *Plut. Rom.* 7.1.

⁴³ 2.370 (see above). Barchiesi 1997: 158.

⁴⁴ *Dion. Hal.* 79.12.

⁴⁵ As a consequence of this conflict, Remus was captured and led to his grandfather Numitor. This event is central to the plot as it facilitated the recognition of the twins' divine origin and the downfall of their uncle Amulius.

⁴⁶ *Rom.* 7.2-3; 79.14. They are both drawing on Fabius Pictor (*FRHist* 2.54-7).

⁴⁷ 1.80.1-3 = *FRHist* 2.751, with 3.469-70; on Aelius Tubero see *FRHist* 1.361-7.

(τριχῆ γὰρ ἐνεπέμνητο καὶ ἐκ διαστήματος ἔθεον) οὐ περιμείναντες τοὺς λοιποὺς ὀρμῶσιν ἐπὶ τοὺς πρῶτους ἐμβοήσαντες ἀθρόοι καὶ περιστάντες ἔβαλλον οἱ μὲν ἀκοντίοις, οἱ δὲ λίθοις, οἱ δ' ὡς ἕκαστοί τι διὰ χειρὸς εἶχον. οἱ δ' ἐκπλαγέντες τῷ παραδόξῳ τοῦ πάθους καὶ ἀμηχανοῦντες ὅ τι δράσειαν πρὸς ὠπλισμένους ἄνοπλοι μαχόμενοι κατὰ πολλὴν εὐπέτειαν ἐχειρώθησαν. ὁ μὲν οὖν Ῥέμος ἐπὶ τοῖς πολεμίοις γενόμενος οὕτως, εἴθ' ὡς ὁ Φάβιος παραδέδωκε δέσμιος εἰς τὴν Ἄλβαν ἀπήγετο.

As Tubero Aelius, a clever man and careful in collecting history, writes: Numitor's men knew beforehand that the young men would celebrate the Lupercalia in honour of Pan (that Arcadian festival as instituted by Evander) and set an ambush in that moment of the celebration, when those young men living around the Palatine should, having sacrificed, come from the Lupercal running around the village, naked, their loins girt with the skin of the recently sacrificed animals. This signified some sort of a traditional purification of the villagers, as is still done today. In that very moment the herdsmen waited to ambush the young men performing the ceremony in a narrow passage of the road, when the first line of those with Remus appeared in front of them, as men of Romulus and the others were behind (they were divided into three parts and ran separately), not waiting for the others, they attacked the first group shouting together and encircling them. Some of them threw javelins, some stones and others whatever they could lay their hands on. The young men, astonished by the sudden incident and not knowing what to do, fighting unarmed against armed men, were subdued with great ease. Thus, Remus fell into the hands of the enemy and was led bound to Alba, either in this way or as Fabius related.

Our sources on the youth of the twins thus report them to be leaders of small bands, groups of young men, with whom they shared a common, pastoral way of life and whom they led into cattle raids. Just like Plutarch's enumeration of the twins' many pastoral activities, Dionysius' description of the fight is indicative of the type of warfare these pastoral groups were employed in. We are not dealing with organised armies, but rather loose groups of shepherds following their leader into expeditions such as cattle raids. They do not fight with swords and shields, but javelins and stones or simply whatever they had at their disposal (ἕκαστοί τι διὰ χειρὸς εἶχον).⁴⁸ Traces of this also surface in Ovid's account: a number of scholars observed that the sport of the twins is very similar to a military exercise. Spears (*iaculis*), crowbars (*vectibus*),

⁴⁸ Dionysius (9.20-1) offers a similar description of the desperate battle at Cremera, lost by the Fabii, one of the Lupercalian *gentes*. The story seems to be ancient (see p. 205).

and stones (*missi saxi*) were used by soldiers for exercise, and even his *campus* recalls *campus Martius*.⁴⁹

The accounts of Ovid and Dionysius refer to the primitive nature of pastoral warfare that the twins seem to be engaged in. Another confirmation comes from Livy, who follows the version Dionysius ascribes to Aelius Tubero, but presents it in a much shorter form:⁵⁰

Iam tum in Palatio Lupercal hoc fuisse ludicrum ferunt, et a Pallanteo, urbe Arcadica, Pallantium, dein Palatium montem appellatum; ibi Evandrum, qui ex eo genere Arcadum multis ante tempestatibus tenuerit loca, sollemne allatum ex Arcadia instituisse ut nudi iuvenes Lycaeum Pana venerantes per lusum atque lasciviam currerent, quem Romani deinde vocarunt Inuum. huic deditis ludicro cum sollemne notum esset insidiosos ob iram praedae amissae latrones, cum Romulus vi se defendisset, Remum cepisse, captum regi Amulio tradidisse, ultro accusantes. crimini maxime dabant in Numitoris agros ab iis impetum fieri; inde eos collecta iuvenum manu hostilem in modum praedas agere.

They say that already at that time on the Palatine there was this festivity, the Lupercalia, and that the hill was called Pallantium from Pallanteum, a city in Arcadia, and then Palatium. There Evander the Arcadian who lived in this place many ages before brought the festival from Arcadia and instituted that young naked men should run playfully and in sport thus worshipping the Lycaean Pan, whom the Romans then called Inuus. The young men, occupied as they were with this play, as the festival was well known, were ambushed by the robbers who were angry because of their lost booty; although Romulus managed to defend himself with force, they took Remus and delivered him to king Amulius and accused him. The greatest accusation was that they made incursions into Numitor's fields; and that they, having gathered a band of young men, drove off spoils from there in a hostile way.

Remus is captured during the ritual run at the festival, and this is again a consequence of the twins' hostile behaviour as they led young men into plunder.

The Augustan historians thus seem to be working with two main versions on the pastoral youth of the twins: one is traced back to Aelius Tubero and the other to Fabius Pictor. In both cases, the motivation for the narrative is cattle raiding. If we compare the Aelius Tubero version (which places the capturing at the Lupercalia) with their adventure in Ovid, we find that similar structural elements emerge in both stories. In Ovid's account, a sacrifice of a she-goat to Faunus precedes a cattle raid

⁴⁹ See Robinson 2011: 255-8. Based on a small fragment, Barchiesi (1997: 155-7) argues that this was already narrated by Ennius.

⁵⁰ Liv. 1.5.1-4.

and a conflict with the robbers. In Livy and Dionysius, after sacrificing a he-goat⁵¹ to Faunus at the Lupercal, the brothers participate in the running ritual when they are suddenly ambushed by robbers. As Briquel observes, the two events are contrasted in the outcome, as Ovid's story ends with the curious victory of Remus, and here it ends with the defeat and capture—of Remus.⁵² If we follow the structural comparison closely, the Lupercalia occupies the place of a cattle raid and the twins are now in the role of the defeated robbers. The two versions are thus two sides of the same coin, the myth of a cattle raid, either successfully conducted by Remus or as an act of revenge exacted on Remus for his successful raid.⁵³

We have seen that cattle raid is the most striking of the basic elements in these myths and is unlikely to be a secondary 'ad hoc' invention. Our consideration of Ovid's aetiological myth, which presents the Lupercalia as a commemoration of a cattle raid, combined with Remus' capturing in Livy and Dionysius, opens up a new perspective on the ritual. At this point, only comparative evidence can help us illuminate the background to this aspect of the Lupercalia. In a recent study on Indo-European warrior mythology in Rome, Woodard concludes that 'it is poetry and aetiology of ritual that most faithfully preserve the elements of the Indo-European mythic matrix'.⁵⁴ This conclusion can be applied to our cattle raid myths.

The procedure of procuring cattle by raids is well known in the Indo-European comparative mythology. Young men of adolescent age⁵⁵ are required to assume an identity of a predatory animal (most frequently a wolf) as a part of their warrior initiation. They are to imitate fierce beasts in battle, rejecting all human clothes and donning the skin of an animal. Hence, they behave as predators, making

⁵¹ On the gender of the victim see above, p. 30.

⁵² Briquel 1983a: 62-3.

⁵³ In the former story the brothers take cattle as spoils of war, and in the latter the enemy has no cattle to capture at the Lupercalia, so the captured Remus occupies the place of booty.

⁵⁴ 2013: 118, with Vuković 2014: 148-50.

⁵⁵ See p. 57.

up warbands⁵⁶ (like wolf packs), they live on the margins of society, wandering the forest and taking prey (*praeda*) in cattle raids or similar expeditions. This helps explain why the Lupercalia is placed in the context of cattle raiding and why the Luperci play the role of the wolf. It also accounts for the description of primitive warfare in the sources above. However, as a discussion of the warband merits its own chapter in the comparative section, here we may follow the lead of our sources and probe them for more evidence on activities potentially related to war.

War and conflict

It is not difficult to see that the cattle raids described above are a form of warfare. They involve incursions into foreign territory, killing the enemy and taking spoils of war in the form of cattle and other goods. Ovid sums it up nicely: *saepe domum veniunt praedonum sanguine laeti /et redigunt actos in sua rura boves*.⁵⁷ The blood mentioned by Ovid also plays a role in a curious ritual that would take place at the Lupercal, and for which our only source is Plutarch:⁵⁸

τὰ δὲ δρώμενα τὴν αἰτίαν ποιεῖ δυστόπαστον· σφάττουσι γὰρ αἶγας, εἶτα μειρακίων δυοῖν ἀπὸ γένους προσαχθέντων αὐτοῖς, οἱ μὲν ἡμαγμένη μαχαίρα τοῦ μετώπου διγγάνουσιν, ἕτεροι δ' ἀπομάπτουσιν εὐθύς, ἕριον βεβρεγμένον γάλακτι προσφέροντες. γελᾶν δὲ δεῖ τὰ μειράκια μετὰ τὴν ἀπόμαξιν.

What is done (at the festival) makes the reason (for its name) hard to guess. For they (sc. the Luperci) slaughter goats and then, after two young men of noble birth are brought to them, they touch their foreheads with a bloody knife, and others immediately wipe it off using wool drenched in milk. The young men must laugh after their foreheads are wiped.

We have seen that the sacrifice of goats is common in our sources, but only Plutarch mentions these two young men who seem to evoke Romulus and Remus in the ritual. Their noble birth and young age certainly match the description of the twins in the foundation myth. It has been argued that the bloodrite represents a ritual of rebirth,

⁵⁶ I have decided to follow M.L. West (who offers a summary of the phenomenon, 2007: 448-52) in using the English 'warband' as an equivalent to the German term *Männerbünde*, which is far more convenient than simply borrowing it into English as e.g. Kershaw (2000) does.

⁵⁷ *F.* 3.63-4.

⁵⁸ *Rom.* 21.4-5. I shall henceforth call it 'the bloodrite'. The rest of this passage has already been cited and discussed on pp. 29-30.

typical in initiation rites.⁵⁹ This would fit with the use of a knife in warrior initiation, especially if the milk is perceived as closely related to the she-wolf, which is the most likely interpretation, suggested by Plutarch in the text below. Warbands make use of a symbolic identification with the wolf to initiate young men into warriors. The use of a knife is itself not sufficient to conclude that this is a ritual of warrior initiation, especially as the word μάχαιρα primarily denotes a knife, such as a sacrificial knife, although it can mean a short sword.⁶⁰ Thus, the further information Plutarch offers is illuminating.⁶¹

Βούτας δέ τις αἰτίας μυθώδεις ἐν ἐλεγείοις περὶ τῶν Ῥωμαικῶν ἀναγράφων φησὶ τοῦ Ἀμουλίου τοὺς περὶ τὸν Ῥωμύλον κρατήσαντας ἐλθεῖν δρόμῳ μετὰ χαρᾶς ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον ἐν ᾧ νηπίοις οὖσιν αὐτοῖς ἡ λύκαινα θηλὴν ὑπέσχε, καὶ μίμημα τοῦ τε δρόμου τὴν ἐορτὴν ἄγεσθαι καὶ τρέχειν τοὺς ἀπὸ γένους τοὺς
 “ἐμποδίου τυπτοντας, ὅπως τότε φάσγαν’ ἔχοντες
 ἐξ Ἄλβης ἔθεν Ῥωμύλος ἠδὲ Ῥέμος.”

καὶ τὸ μὲν ξίφος ἡμαγμένον προσφέρεσθαι τῷ μετώπῳ τοῦ τότε φόνου καὶ κινδύνου σύμβολον, τὴν δὲ διὰ τοῦ γάλακτος ἀποκάθαρσιν ὑπόμνημα τῆς τροφῆς αὐτῶν εἶναι... τὸν δὲ κύνα φαίη τις ἄν, εἰ μὲν ἡ θυσία καθαρισμὸς ἐστὶ, θύεσθαι καθαρίῳ χρωμένῳ αὐτῷ· καὶ γὰρ Ἕλληνες ἐν τε τοῖς καθαρισμοῖς σκύλακας ἐκφέρουσι καὶ πολλαχοῦ χρῶνται τοῖς λεγομένοις περισκυλακισμοῖς· εἰ δὲ τῇ λυκαίνῃ χαριστήρια ταῦτα καὶ τροφεία καὶ σωτήρια Ῥωμύλου τελοῦσιν, οὐκ ἀτόπως ὁ κύων σφάττεται· λύκοις γὰρ ἐστὶ πολέμιος· εἰ μὴ νῆ Δία κολάζεται τὸ ζῷον ὡς παρενοχλοῦν τοὺς Λουπέρκους ὅταν περιθέωσι.

A certain Butas, writing on mythical aetiologies of the Romans in elegiac verse, says that followers of Romulus having defeated Amulius, came running with great joy to the place where the she-wolf offered them her dug when they were babies, and that the festival is conducted as an imitation of that run and that those of noble birth run ‘striking passer-bys, as then carrying swords Romulus and Remus ran from Alba’. And (he says that) the blooded sword is applied to their forehead as a symbol of the slaughter and danger that happened at the time, and the purification by milk is a memorial of their food... If the sacrifice is a purification, one could say that the dog is to be sacrificed as it is used as a purificatory animal. For the Greeks carry forth puppies in their purifications and often make use of these aforementioned ‘periskylakismoī’ rites. If these things are done as a thank offering to the she-wolf and to the nursing and salvation of Romulus, then the dog is not slain unreasonably for he is an enemy to wolves. Unless, indeed, the animal is being punished for annoying the Luperci as they run around.

⁵⁹ For a discussion see Köves-Zulauf 1990: 256-64 (with references) and further on the bloodrite in heading 3.1.4.

⁶⁰ *LSJ* s.v.

⁶¹ Plut. *Rom.* 21.6-8.

The words φάσγανον (in Plutarch's direct citation from Butas), and ξίφος (in his paraphrase), now clearly denote a sword.⁶² The use of ξίφος probably appears under the influence of Butas' *aetion*.⁶³ This myth presents the running ritual as a vigorous triumphant march after the twins' victory over Amulius. As an aetiological myth, it explains much less than Ovid's, as it does not account for either the nudity or the duality. But this myth stresses an element also implicit in Ovid, the aggression and warrior prowess of both the twins. Butas strives to explain the knife and the blood of the ritual with reference to the slaughter at Alba Longa. The Lupercalia is again connected with a violent episode of the foundation myth. Instead of the herdsmen and cattle robbers, the twins vanquish more powerful enemies, which brings out their warrior qualities. The blood, to which Ovid and the historians allude, resurfaces with the harsh undertones of bloodshed at Alba Longa. The comparison with the she-wolf of the foundation myth is based on a shared structure as both have mortal danger relieved through the nourishment of milk. Binder suggests that the appearance of blood and the subsequent relief symbolically represent 'befreiung aus tödlicher Gefahr'.⁶⁴

This remark gains additional weight in light of the fact that the rite shares elements in common with sacrifice. In Roman sacrifice, the sacrificial animal had to be prepared for the killing through *immolatio* when its head was sprinkled with *mola salsa*. At the same time, wine was poured over it and a knife applied to its back.⁶⁵ Plutarch does not mention *mola salsa* in this context, but we saw that the Vestals baked cakes of spelt at the Lupercalia.⁶⁶ The combination of knife and blood recalls the preparation for animal sacrifice with the application of knife and wine. Of course, this does not mean that the bloodrite retained a memory of some ancient form of

⁶² *LSJ* s.v.

⁶³ See *FRHist* 3.185.

⁶⁴ Binder 1997: 229.

⁶⁵ Prescendi 2007: 37 with references.

⁶⁶ See pp. 42-3.

human sacrifice where blood prefigures wine.⁶⁷ The correspondence is suggestive rather than literal and the role of the sacrificial blood of the goat is here clearly to face the youths with the act of animal sacrifice itself. In chapter three, we shall explore this theme further and see how it might fit the wolf aspect of the Lupercalia.

Another element which stands out in Plutarch's account of the festival, and which is not mentioned by any other source is the sacrifice of a dog. While Plutarch's conjectures on the issue are fairly amusing, especially if one looks at his *Roman Questions* 68 where he discusses it at some length, it is reasonable to conclude that he has failed to answer this question.⁶⁸ However, his hypothesis that this is done as τῆ λυκαίνῃ χαριστήρια points in the right direction, even if he ends the same sentence with the absurd reasoning that the dog is sacrificed as an enemy to wolves. A dog is the domestic counterpart of the savage wolf. Canines have a special role in warband mythologies and this is one of the rare occasions in Roman religion where a dog is sacrificed.⁶⁹

However, another aetiological myth, somewhat similar to that of Butas, suggests a connection between warriors and the Lupercalia. In his chapter on ancient Roman customs, Valerius Maximus points to two festivals of the equestrian order:⁷⁰

Equestris vero ordinis iuventus omnibus annis bis urbem spectaculo sui sub magnis auctoribus celebrabat: Lupercalium enim mos a Romulo et Remo inchoatus est tunc, cum laetitia exultantes, quod his avus Numitor rex Albanorum eo loco, ubi educati erant, urbem condere permiserat sub monte Palatino, hortatu Faustuli educatoris sui, quem Euander Arcas consecraverat, facto sacrificio caesisque capris epularum hilaritate ac vino largiore proveci, divisa pastorali turba, cincti obvios pellibus immolatarum hostiarum iocantes petiverunt. cuius hilaritatis memoria annuo circuitu feriarum repetitur. Trabeatos vero equites Idibus Iuliis Q. Fabius transvehi instituit.

The youth of the equestrian order filled the city twice every year with a display of themselves, initiated by major figures. The custom of the Lupercalia was started by Romulus and Remus when they jumped with joy because their grandfather Numitor, the king of the Albans, gave them permission to found a

⁶⁷ It can also hardly be some form of atonement of the Luperci for the sacrifice of the animal, as Scholz (1980: 325-8) claims.

⁶⁸ See also *Quaest. Rom.* 68, 111.

⁶⁹ A dog is sacrificed at the poorly attested *supplicia canum* (Scullard 1981: 170) and *augurium canarium*. Corsano (1977: 154-6) provides a useful discussion with references. It is also sacrificed at the Robigalia (Ov. *F.* 4.908). See also C.J. Smith 1996a: 80-3.

⁷⁰ 2.2.9.

city under the Palatine hill, at that place where they were reared. On the encouragement of Faustulus, their foster-father, on the hill, which was consecrated by Evander the Arcadian, having sacrificed and flayed the goats, they were carried away by the fun of the feast and a generous amount of wine. The pastoral throng was then divided into teams, and girt with the skins of the sacrificed victims they jokingly chased those they met on the way. The memory of this meriment is maintained in an annual cycle of festivals. Quintus Fabius instituted the parade of equestrians in purple cloaks on the Ides of July.

Valerius' myth shares a similar temporal setting with Butas' *aetion* as the twins run with great joy from Alba Longa to the Lupercal. However, the reason is no longer the slaughter of Amulius' men, the swords are absent, and the festival is simply founded on entertainment and a generous amount of wine, not blood. The myth focuses on the fun in the ritual and mentions little else, but the reference to the equestrians is worth exploring. Valerius refers to two separate festivals, the parade in July and the Lupercalia, as occasions for the equestrian youth to show off. They both belong to the sphere of Augustus' restorations that also involved the equestrian *lusus Troiae*, and encouraged the creation of *collegia iuvenum* that culminated with his two grandsons (Gaius and Lucius) being proclaimed *principes iuventutis*.⁷¹ Once in exile, Ovid reminisces on his past ride in the equestrian parade in front of Augustus, which implies the *princeps* once approved of him. In the republic, the event followed an examination (*recognitio*) of the fitness of the equestrians and was conducted before the censors.⁷²

It is clear why Valerius connects the festival with the Roman knights. From Augustus onwards, the Luperci are recruited from the equestrian order.⁷³ Given that this was not the case in the late Republic, the change is sometimes taken to argue that Augustus reformed the Lupercalia.⁷⁴ However, Suetonius only says that he restored (*restituit*) the ritual,⁷⁵ and Wiseman suggests he simply re-emphasized an older

⁷¹ The *iuventutes* (later called *collegia iuvenum*) were associations of youngsters (mostly men in their twenties) who practiced combat sports, cultic activities and shared communal meals. See Laes and Strubbe 2014: 122-35 (with references).

⁷² Ovid *Tri.* 2.89-90 (see Ingleheart 2010: *ad loc.*).

⁷³ A number of inscriptions make this clear (see Granino Cerere and Scheid 1999: 129-34).

⁷⁴ Holleman 1974: 138-45; Scholz 1980: 321.

⁷⁵ *Aug.* 31.4. Of course we may disbelieve him, but his mention of banning boys from running (*vetuit currere imberbes*) is hardly an argument for a substantial reform.

tradition.⁷⁶ Wiseman also finds that Polybius' description of the early Roman cavalry parallels that of the Luperci:⁷⁷

ὁ δὲ καθοπλισμὸς τῶν ἰππέων νῦν μὲν ἐστὶ παραπλήσιος τῷ τῶν Ἑλλήνων· τὸ δὲ παλαιὸν πρῶτον θώρακας οὐκ εἶχον, ἀλλ' ἐν περιζώμασιν ἐκινδύνευον, ἐξ οὗ πρὸς μὲν τὸ καταβαίνειν καὶ ταχέως ἀναπηδᾶν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἵππους ἐτοίμως διέκειντο καὶ πρακτικῶς, πρὸς δὲ τὰς συμπλοκάς ἐπισφαλῶς εἶχον διὰ τὸ γυμνοὶ κινδυνεύειν.

Nowadays, the armour of the cavalry is very similar to that of the Greeks. In ancient times they did not wear a breastplate, but exposed themselves to risk in girdles, because of which they were able to readily and practically dismount and quickly mount a horse, but on the other hand they were in danger at close range as they were exposing themselves naked.

The word Polybius uses here is περιζώμα, one that we have encountered in Plutarch's account of the Luperci.⁷⁸ Polybius information enables us to see that Valerius' connection between the Lupercalia and the equestrian parade is in fact ancient.⁷⁹ The primitive Roman cavalry fought in the same loincloth that members of their order wore as Luperci. This aspect of the Lupercalia also shares an interesting link with the foundation myth. Romulus had a group of faithful warriors as his bodyguard, the *celerēs*. Other sources claim that the *celerēs* was an early name for the *equites*.⁸⁰ One version of the death of Remus has it that he was killed not by Romulus, but by Romulus' foreman, one called *Celer* (The Swift).⁸¹ The mythical *celerēs* of Romulus share their swiftness with the cavalry and the running Luperci. This could be traced to the warbands as swift elite troops. The Luperci were a ritual remnant of this ancient warrior system. Comparative evidence will show that their connection to the horse has solid parallels and must have been a part of the festival's prehistory.

To conclude, this analysis has contributed to our understanding of various aspect of the Lupercalia that bear connections to wolf mythology. The name of the

⁷⁶ Wiseman 1995a: 11-3.

⁷⁷ Polyb. 6.25.3-4.

⁷⁸ *Rom.* 21.5 (p. 29).

⁷⁹ We should not follow Wiseman in his speculation that Fabius Rullianus (the authority Valerius refers to) reformed the Lupercalia in 304 BC when he established the equestrian parade.

⁸⁰ For the two groups of the respective sources and a discussion on the issue see H. Hill 1938: 283-290.

⁸¹ *Ov. F.* 4.820-62. In contrast to Remus ('the Slow') whose name was frequently derived from *remorari* (Wiseman 1995b: 107-11).

festival, its priests, and the cave from which they start their running ritual are all derived from *lupus* and are connected to the famous *lupa* of the Roman foundation myth. Many of the aetiological myths insist on cattle raids as origins of the running ritual, with no apparent correlate in the ritual as we know it. This problem calls for the use of comparative evidence on warbands, their raiding practices and their assuming of a wolfish identity. Various elements in the ritual seem to correspond to the violence of the foundation myth and are suggestive of warrior initiation. The strong links between the Lupercalia and the foundation myth suggest it is useful to consider them together, in opposition to scholars who argued for a strict separation.⁸²

⁸² Such as Ulf 1982 and Marchetti 2002: 77-92.

1.4 The Myth of Evander and Arcadian Origins

In the previous chapters of this section we often came across the god of the Lupercalia. We have observed that the sources are far from unanimous in naming the divinity in question, as they refer to him as Faunus, Inuus, Februus, and Pan Lycaeus. Whereas the names Inuus and Februus are easily explained as epithets of Faunus, we are still left with the issue of Pan Lycaeus, both in the Greek and Latin version. Our sources often associate this appellation with an aetiological myth that sees the festival as Greek in origin. The hero Evander comes from Arcadia to the site of the future city of Rome, settles on the Palatine hill and there institutes the Lupercalia, in honour of Pan, the god of the Arcadians. This is the core of the myth of Evander, which is the subject of this chapter.

We again start from the most important source on the Lupercalia, Ovid, who (as opposed to other authors) consistently refers to the god of the festival as Faunus. However, as in many other instances, Ovid does not make a clear differentiation between the Roman god and his Greek counterpart.¹ His treatment of the Lupercalia consists of aetiological myths that attempt to answer particular questions concerning the festival. In the last section, we saw that the question about the name of the festival has an obvious answer. Both Lupercal and the Lupercalia are derived from the she-wolf of the Roman foundation myth. But he also offers the possibility of a Greek origin for the name: *Quid vetat Arcadio dictos a monte Lupercos?/ Faunus in Arcadia templa Lycaeus habet?*² Of course, the Roman god Faunus never had a temple in Arcadia. What Ovid is referring to is Pan, thus identifying a Roman god with his Greek counterpart, in the usual procedure of *interpretatio Graeca*.

¹ See C.M.C. Green 2002: 80-1 who illustrates this in the example of Venus in *Fasti* book four.

² *F.* 2.423-4. One manuscript omits this couplet, and it may be an interpolation (Robinson 2011: 276).

Poetic accounts

The myth of Arcadian origin stands at the very beginning of Ovid's treatment of the Lupercalia:³

Tertia post Idus nudos aurora Lupercos
aspicit, et Fauni sacra bicornis eunt.
dicite, Pierides, sacrorum quae sit origo,
attigerint Latias unde petita domos.
Pana deum pecoris veteres coluisse feruntur
Arcades; Arcadiis plurimus ille iugis.
testis erit Pholoe, testes Stymphalides undae,
quique citis Ladon in mare currit aquis,
cinctaque pinetis nemoris iuga Nonacrini,
altaque Cyllene Parrhasiaeque nives.
Pan erat armenti, Pan illic numen equarum,
munus ob incolumes ille ferebat oves.
transtulit Euander silvestria numina secum:
hic, ubi nunc urbs est, tum locus urbis erat.
inde deum colimus devectaque sacra Pelasgis:
flamen ad haec prisco more Dialis erat.
cur igitur currant, et cur (sic currere mos est)
nuda ferant posita corpora veste, rogas?
ipse deus velox discurrere gaudet in altis
montibus, et subitas concitat ipse fugas:
ipse deus nudus nudos iubet ire ministros;
nec satis ad cursus commoda vestis erit.
ante Iovem genitum terras habuisse feruntur
Arcades, et luna gens prior illa fuit.
vita feris similis, nullos agitata per usus:
artis adhuc expers et rude volgus erat.
pro domibus frondes norant, pro frugibus herbas;
nectar erat palmis hausta duabus aqua.
nullus anhelabat sub adunco vomere taurus,
nulla sub imperio terra colentis erat:
nullus adhuc erat usus equi; se quisque ferebat:
ibat ovis lana corpus amicta sua.
sub Iove durabant et corpora nuda gerebant,
docta graves imbres et tolerare Notos.
nunc quoque detecti referunt monimenta vetusti
moris, et antiquas testificantur opes.

On the third day after the Ides the dawn observes the naked Luperci, and the festival of horned Faunus begins. Tell me, Pierides, what is the origin of the festival, from where were they taken to reach Latin homes? It is said that the ancient Arcadians worshipped Pan, the god of cattle. He often appears in the Arcadian mountains. Witnesses to this are Mount Pholoe, the Stymphalian lake, and Ladon that runs into the sea with its speedy waters, the ridges of the Nonacrine wood surrounded by pine trees, high Cyllene and the snows of Parrhasia. There Pan was the divinity of cattle, and also of mares. He received gifts for keeping safe the sheep. Evander transported the woodland deity with

³ F. 2.267-2.302.

him; here where the city is now, there was only the site of a city. Hence we worship the god, and by ancient custom the flamen Dialis has been present at this festival introduced by Pelasgi. Why then do they (the Luperci) run you ask, and why (this is the custom of running) do they lay aside their clothes and have their bodies naked? The god himself likes to run quickly in high mountains and he incites a sudden flight. The god, himself naked, commands his ministers to go naked, nor will clothing be very comfortable when running. The Arcadians are said to have inhabited the land before Jupiter was born, and that people is older than the moon. Their life was similar to that of beasts, not affected by practices of civilisation; the people was still artless and primitive. They used branches for houses, herbs for corn, their nectar was water collected in the palms of two hands. No bull panted under the bent ploughshare, there was no land under the control of a husbandman. They did not use horses yet, but each one bore his own weight. The sheep walked covered by its own wool. They lived under the open sky and exposed themselves naked, used to enduring heavy downpours and the south wind. Now too, uncovered (the Luperci) recall the memory of the old custom and testify to the ancient resources.

Ovid introduces the Lupercalia by calling it a festival of Faunus (*sacra Fauni*), but the adjective *bicornis* already betrays the famous horns of Greek Pan.⁴ It is thus not surprising that he refers to him as Pan a few verses later (271), having made the transition to Greece. The god is called Pan up to the very end of this section when he suddenly reverts to Faunus again. One would expect this twist to be announcing a return to native ground, but what Ovid actually tells is a Greek story, a sexual comedy set in Lydia, with Hercules and Omphale as the protagonists.⁵ Ovid thus uses Pan and Faunus interchangeably, apparently referring to the same divinity. However, we cannot say that the use of the names in the *Fasti* is arbitrary, as he writes Faunus whenever the rituals are implied,⁶ while both ‘Pan’ and ‘Faunus’ appear in his aetiological narratives. Ovid thus makes it clear that the god was called Faunus at his festival in Rome, and his identification with Pan does not detract from this fact, as far as the public festival is concerned.⁷

Poetic imagination takes Ovid into the landscape and topography of early Arcadia, from where Evander is said to have migrated to the future site of Rome. To

⁴ Which appears elsewhere in the *Fasti* (Stroh 1999: 584-5, 598; Robinson 2011: 208).

⁵ See Fantham 1983: 191-201; Robinson 2011: 225-49.

⁶ 2.268: *Fauni sacra*; 2.361: *Fauno caesa de more capella*; 5.99: *sacra Fauni*; 5.101: *coleris cinctutis, Faune, Lupercis*.

⁷ H.C. Parker 1993: 199-217. Stroh (1999: 590-8) also recognises Faunus as the god of the festival in the *Fasti*, but later seems to be taken in by Ovid’s poetic conflation (Pan-Faunus).

answer the question of the nudity of the Luperci, he develops the pastoral atmosphere of ancient Arcadia. The Arcadians lived in an idyllic rural setting, so primitive as not to cover their bodies.⁸ Certainly, this is not an original aetiology for the nudity of the Luperci. As Robinson observes, this pastoral setting was the stock of Hellenistic poets who inspired Ovid and many of his contemporaries.⁹ Ovid's story is a variation of the Golden Age myth: he places the primitive Arcadians before the birth of Jove, i.e. in the age of Saturn.¹⁰ A historian of religion will regret the fact that the poet chose to present this commonplace story rather than gives us more details about the ritual.¹¹ The myth of Evander is here presented in a condensed form, but in book one Ovid gave a long description of his arrival, in an aetiological myth made to explain the origin of the Carmentalia festival.¹² He used the episode to convey an ideological message through the character of Evander's mother, Carmenta. Carmenta falls into a divine trance and prophesies the stages of Roman history, ending with Augustus as its culmination.¹³ The myth of Evander in Ovid is thus not only an innocent pastoral idyll, but bears political overtones.¹⁴

We may observe the political aspect of the myth in other Augustan poets, particularly Propertius and Vergil. Propertius begins the fourth book of his Elegies with the pastoral atmosphere of early Rome:¹⁵

Hoc quodcumque vides, hospes, qua maxima Roma est,
ante Phrygem Aenean collis et herba fuit,
atque ubi Navali stant sacra Palatia Phoebō,
Euandri profugae concubuerē boves.
fictilibus crevere deis haec aurea templa,
nec fuit opprobrio facta sine arte casa

⁸ Otherwise, Ovid is fond of the subject of the prehistoric golden age with its primitive way of life (e.g. *Met.* 1.89-112).

⁹ The story reminds us of Theocritus and it has several Callimachean elements (Robinson 2011: *ad loc.*). For the Hellenistic background to Ovid's aetiologies see J.F. Miller 1992: 11-31; Barchiesi 1997: 214-37.

¹⁰ And they are even older than the moon. On *προσεληναῖοι* see Delcourt 2005: 143; Robinson 2011: 221.

¹¹ It is good to remember that this is the third of Ovid's four Lupercalian *aetia*. We have seen two others in 1.1. and 1.3 (above); the fourth is a sexual comedy (see p. 71, n. 5 above).

¹² *F.* 1.465-542, but also 5.89-100 and other passing references (Robinson 2011: 214).

¹³ *F.* 1.509-36. In exile he tops it up with a reference to Livia's deification (See S.J. Green 2004: *ad loc.*)

¹⁴ For greater detail on Evander in the *Fasti* see Fantham 1992: 155-73.

¹⁵ 4.1A.1-6.

Friend, whatever you see here, where the great Rome now lies, was hill and grass before Phrygian Aeneas. And where the Palatine stands, sacred to Naval Phoebus, the migrant cattle of Evander used to lie together. These golden temples have risen from gods of clay, nor was a hut built without skill considered shameful.

As opposed to Ovid, Propertius merely touches on the presence of Evander in this pastoral setting. With a curious slant, he (rather bluntly) presents cattle as having intercourse on the sacred Palatine hill.¹⁶ This establishes a stark contrast between past and present, where this location houses Apollo in his new temple, built by Augustus and situated next to his Palatine *domus*.¹⁷ As the owner of these cattle, Evander occupies a conspicuously minor position in Propertius' description of rural scenery. He does not state that Evander instituted the Lupercalia (as is the usual claim), but continues with a series of statements that contrast past and present Rome. One of these contrasting comparisons makes for an interesting *aition* for the whips of the Luperci: *verbera pellitus saetosa movebat arator,/ unde licens Fabius sacra Lupercus habet*.¹⁸ The whips that ploughmen used for lashing cattle are the origin of the *februa* that Luperci now apply to Roman *matronae*. If nothing else, at least the Lupercalia has lived up to the image of primitivism.

Propertius concludes his series of contrasting comparisons by denying a link to the mythical past, embodied in the figure of the she-wolf: *nil patrium nisi nomen habet Romanus alumnus:/ sanguinis altricem non putat esse lupam*.¹⁹ The minor position which Evander occupies should be interpreted within this wider context of difference between rural mythistory and presently urban Rome. Propertius' passing reference to Evander is a counterpoint to the important role he merits in Vergil's *Aeneid* just as Propertius' stress on differences subverts Vergil's agglomeration of similarities between the historical and Augustan Rome. As Heyworth argues, the

¹⁶ Many editors have emended the text to *procubuere* to avoid the embarrassing fact. Heyworth (2007a: 414) retains *concupuere*, which makes better sense.

¹⁷ Ovid mentions Apollo's temple at *F.* 4.951-5.

¹⁸ 4.1A.25-6. Note the phrase *verbera saetosa*, corresponding to Plutarch's σὺντεσι λασιόις (Plut. *Caes.* 61), and the MS reading *caper hirtus* in *Fasti* 2.441 (p. 26, n. 44).

¹⁹ 4.1A.37-8.

poem is in many ways a reaction to Vergil's exaggerated description of Evander's settlement.²⁰

In book eight of the Aeneid, Vergil presents the structural components of Evander's Pallanteum as very similar to those of Augustan Rome. We are made to believe that the important institutions were already there with Evander and only the external conditions have improved, presumably thanks to the genius of Augustus.²¹ From a minor figure in mythic aetiologies, Vergil elevates Evander to be the founder of Roman religious institutions and thus in a way the founder of Rome itself: *Romanae conditor arcis*.²² After Aeneas receives divine instructions to make Evander his ally, the Greek hero welcomes him in his settlement on the Palatine.²³ Aeneas can see many facets of what one immediately recognises as later-day Rome: the senate (105), the Salii (285), Carmental gate and shrine (337-8), Tarpeian rock (347), the grove that is to become the asylum of Romulus, the Argiletum (346), and even the Capitol where the presence of Jupiter can be already felt (351-2).²⁴ One of the highlights of the tour is the Lupercal cave:²⁵

Vix ea dicta, dehinc progressus monstrat et aram
et Carmentalem Romani nomine portam
quam memorant, nymphae priscum Carmentis honorem,
vatis fatidicae, cecinit quae prima futuros
Aeneadas magnos et nobile Pallanteum.
hinc lucum ingentem, quem Romulus acer asylum
rettulit, et gelida monstrat sub rupe Lupercal
Parrhasio dictum Panos de more Lycaeii.

Barely had he finished saying this, when proceeding from there he showed the altar and the gate which Romans call Carmental, an ancient honour for the nymph Carmentis, the fate-telling prophetess, who was the first to prophesy about the future great descendants of Aeneas and the fame of Pallanteum. Next he revealed the vast grove, which clever Romulus turned into an asylum, and the Lupercal under the cold cliff, named in the Parrhasian manner after Pan Lycaeus.

²⁰ And should be read in the wider context of Propertius' stance towards Augustus (Heyworth 2007b: 93-128).

²¹ *Aen.* 8.99-100: *tecta vident, quae nunc Romana potentia caelo/aequavit, tum res inopes Evandrus habebat.*

²² *Aen.* 8.313; Gransden 1974: *ad loc*; Papaioannou 2003: 688.

²³ *Aen.* 8.51-369. The bracketed numbers in this paragraph refer to verses in this passage.

²⁴ Much of this contradicts extant Roman historical traditions. For example, the foundations of the senate and the Salii are usually placed in the later times of Romulus and Numa, respectively.

²⁵ *Aen.* 8.337-45.

Parrhasia was often used as a synonym for Arcadia, and with this derivation Vergil backs the Arcadian origin of the Lupercalia, just like Ovid in the aforementioned account.²⁶ Vergil's Evander is not the traditional minor figure, but a central character of the second half of the *Aeneid*, an ally of Aeneas who will even lose his son in the war against the Rutulians. Vergil exaggerated his role in the founding of Rome to stress the significance of Greek import in Roman culture from its very beginnings. In many ways, the pious Evander is portrayed as Aeneas' Greek double, whom *ineluctabile fatum* (8.334) exiled from his eastern homeland and forced to fight for his settlement in Italy.²⁷ Vergil overcomes the difficulty of Evander's ethnicity (one would expect the Greek to be an enemy of the Trojans) by postulating a common genealogy that derives both the heroes from the titan Atlas.²⁸ The two founders, Aeneas and Evander are tied by common divine descent. This elevation of Greek Evander to a prominent role in Rome's foundation epic is indissoluble from the purpose of the epic itself. A Roman national epic illustrates its cultural achievements, and Rome can be considered as the equal of Greece, especially if Greek culture was present in it from the very start.

Concluding the survey of the myth of Evander in Augustan poets, one may note that it always combines the external traits of a pastoral idyll with political implications. The Lupercalia finds its origin in ancient prehistoric time, it is a relic of the inscrutable past when a village in the countryside was a precursor to the great city of Rome.²⁹ The festival becomes enmeshed in the fabric of grand aetiological narratives. While Hellenistic poets provided the model for the aetiological form, the basis for the contents of the myth comes from Roman tradition, which a poet was free

²⁶ Servius commentary on the verse confirms this (*Aen.* 8.344) *PARRHASIO DICTVM PANOS DE MORE LYCAEI ordo est: monstrat lupercal Panos Lycaeī, dictum de more Parrhasio, id est ostendit Lupercal Panos Lycaeī, dicatum ex more Arcadico: nam Parrhasia Arcadia est. DICTVM dicatum, consecratum. PANOS LYCAEI 'huius Panos' genitivus est Graecus, et 'Panos Lycaeī' sic dictum est, ut 'Iovis Olympi', 'Apollinis Delphorum'.* See also his comment on the previous verse (*Aen.* 8.343).

²⁷ Papaioannou 2003: 693-7.

²⁸ *Aen.* 8.126-44.

²⁹ It is not only the poets that entertained this opinion. Cicero refers to the Luperci as *fera quaedam sodalitas et plane pastoricia atque agrestis germanorum Lupercorum, quorum coitio illa silvestris ante est instituta quam humanitas atque leges* (*Cic. Cael.* 26).

to cast into a new mould. This reshaping still retained the core of a historical narrative, but was remodelled into a pastoral setting with political overtones. But the political aspect of the myth of Evander also appears in the historians.

Historical accounts

In the previous chapters we have encountered a number of instances where historians remark on the Greek origin of the Lupercalia with a reference to Evander. Pope Gelasius draws this argument against senator Andromachus by citing Livy, and we also find it in the first book of Livy.³⁰ Plutarch, like Ovid, gives this as one of the possible reasons for the name of the festival.³¹ In his dense wording, Valerius Maximus still finds a place to refer to the Palatine *quem Euander Arcas consecraverat*.³² Most other sources that mention Evander also refer to him as the founder of the Lupercalia ritual, and little else besides.³³ The exception is Dionysius of Halicarnassus who in his voluminous *Roman Antiquities* offers a verbose account of early Latium.

In the first book of the *Antiquities* we read that Latium was originally occupied by the Sicels, a native barbarian race. They were suppressed by the Aborigines, another native Italic race whom Dionysius strives to prove to be Oenotrians, descendants of Greeks.³⁴ He then describes the advent of Pelasgians from Greece, who united with the Aborigines to fight the Umbrians and the Sicels.³⁵ Curiously, Pelasgians too, as he describes them, have Italic customs such as the *ver sacrum*.³⁶ However, for Dionysius both Aborigines and Pelasgians were Greeks as they originally came from Arcadia. Soon, Evander arrives, but he is only one in a

³⁰ Gel. 12; Livy 1.5.2.

³¹ Rom. 21.3; *Caes.* 61.1.

³² 2.2.9. See p. 65-6.

³³ Evander was also connected with the arrival of Hercules, see p. 84.

³⁴ 1.7-13.

³⁵ 1.17-21. Compare with Ovid's waves of migration from Greece *F.* 4.63-78.

³⁶ 1.23-4. See pp. 201-3.

series of Arcadian migrants.³⁷ The Trojans that came with Aeneas also included many Greeks, originally from Arcadia, of course.³⁸ One can see why Bayet aptly called it ‘une théorie pan-arcadienne’.³⁹ All of these people coalesce to make up a population whose descendants will one day found the city of Rome with Romulus and Remus. Taking into account all these Greek elements, one is surprised by the fact that the Romans spoke Latin, and not a dialect of Greek. In fact, Dionysius asserts that Latin is ‘neither utterly barbarous nor absolutely Greek, but a mixture of both, the greater part of which is Aeolic’.⁴⁰ We are thus dealing with an author who is openly biased in favour of Greek, and in specific, Arcadian origins.

The ideological background of Dionysius’ *Roman Antiquities* is an issue well discussed in recent decades, and easily detected in his preface to the work itself. Dionysius claims to have arrived in Italy at the time Augustus put an end to civil war, in 30 BC.⁴¹ The first part of the work was published around 8/7 BC. Just like the Augustan poets then, Dionysius was working in the political atmosphere of the early principate. On the one hand, he is impressed by the overwhelming power of Rome, and on the other by his Greek origins and Greek Classical authors he seeks to imitate. His exposition of the origins of Rome has a double purpose: to teach his Greek readership that Romans are not barbarians (as they derive from the most illustrious Greek stock), and also to instruct the Romans how they ought to behave by following the early exempla of their forefathers.⁴² His work is then an attempt to build a bridge between the Classical past and Augustan present, Greek culture and Roman power.⁴³

³⁷ 1.31.

³⁸ 1.50; 1.61.

³⁹ Bayet 1920: 67.

⁴⁰ μὲν οὐτ’ ἄκρωσ βαρβαρον οὐτ’ ἀπηρτισμένως Ἑλλάδα φθέγγονται, μικτὴν δὲ τινα ἐξ ἀμφοῖν, ἧς ἔστιν ἡ πλείων Αἰολίς τοῦτο μόνον ἀπολαύσαντες ἐκ τῶν πολλῶν ἐπιμιξιών, τὸ μὴ πᾶσι τοῖς φθόγγοις ὀρθοεπεῖν (*Ant. Rom.* 1.90.1). Many other authors claimed that Latin was a dialect of Greek, see de Jonge (2008: 60-5) and Stevens 2006: 115-44.

⁴¹ 1.7.2.

⁴² Dion. Hal. 1.5. For greater detail see the chapter on ‘The political meaning of Dionysius history’ in Gabba 1991: 190-216.

⁴³ For a discussion of Dionysius ideological background see Wiater 2011: 92-106.

Thus, although Dionysius accumulates a great amount of material on early Rome, and cites many of his predecessors, his history is as ideologically imbued as Vergil's poetry, although his link to Augustus is not as strong.⁴⁴ Dionysius professes an apparent honesty in presenting a true history of Rome, but is selective with sources about which we know very little. He is inventive in filling out the gaps when his sources are scarce. His methods of selection and ingenuity are greatly informed by his intention, professed in the preface, to demonstrate the Greek origin of the Romans.

Two examples, which are also important for our considerations on the myth of Evander, are illustrative of Dionysius' tendencies. In book one of the *Antiquities*, he seeks to present early Latium as formed by several waves of migrations from Greece. He openly rejects the opinion of historians who saw the Aborigines as a native Italic race and favours those who qualify them as Greeks.⁴⁵ Pressed to explain when and where they came from, he reverts to Oenotrians as the reported most ancient Greek colony in Italy.⁴⁶ In order to identify the Aborigines with the Oenotrians, he stresses their common lifestyle, living in the mountains. Then he avails himself of the marvellous name-changing method, claiming that the Oenotrians changed their name into Aborigines to describe their lifestyle, deriving the word from *ab*+*ἄριος*, a Greco-Roman hybrid.⁴⁷

The second wave of migration involved the Pelasgians, a name the Greeks often applied to the native inhabitants of the lands they colonised.⁴⁸ Pelasgians originally signified the barbarian autochthonous population of Greece itself, but by Hellenistic times this name had acquired positive connotations of primordial Greeks

⁴⁴ See Gabba 1991: 116-7.

⁴⁵ 1.10-11

⁴⁶ 1.11-14.

⁴⁷ 1.12. See Gabba 1991: 113-5 and Delcourt 2005: 132-5, J.M. Hill 2011: 265-71

⁴⁸ The practice of characterising other nations through the use of stereotypical notions is well researched. The concept of Otherness in literary theory applies to this issue.

or proto-Greeks.⁴⁹ Dionysius claims that they originally came from Peloponnese, and he is thus referring to a tradition (which goes back to Hesiod) about Pelasgians as Arcadians.⁵⁰ The idea that Romans are descended from Pelasgians is also not novel, as Baton of Sinope promoted it in the third century BC.⁵¹ However, as opposed to his predecessors, Dionysius strongly advocated both the Pelasgians' Greek origin and their position as ancestors of Romans. Additionally, Dionysius adduces a few other tribes of Greek migrants, the main group being led by Hercules.⁵² We may conclude that, in producing several waves of Greek migrations to Latium, Dionysius wished to reinforce this myth and cement his hypothesis on the Greek origins of Rome.⁵³

Dionysius' narrative is thus carefully structured and expanded from many previous accounts. This tendency can also be observed in the myth of Evander, which he expands on the basis of an older tradition. He is able to use the tradition as a prop to support his elaborate schema of Greek migrations most of which, Dionysius insists, must originate in Arcadia. Also, he chooses Arcadia and not some other province because Arcadians were considered the oldest of the Greeks, and were seen as conservative in their legends and customs. By deriving the Romans from the most ancient Greek stock, Dionysius was creating a golden age model which, in his opinion, the Romans preserved better than the Greeks themselves.⁵⁴ The Arcadians represented the purity of Greece in its ideal, ancient form. They took great pride in the fact that they were autochthonous, and inhabited the land of their forefathers 'before the creation of the moon'. Pausanias and Strabo shared this sentiment and

⁴⁹ Bayet 1920: 104. A good example is the opinion of Greek historians (such as Herodotus) that Etruscans were Pelasgians. Dionysius was aware of this tradition, but he refutes it (1.26-30).

⁵⁰ 1.17-21; Merkelbach and West F 161 (=Ephor. *FGrH* 70 F 113).

⁵¹ Bat. Sin. *FGrH* 268 F 5 (=Athen. 14.639d-640a). I am here following Delcourt 2005: 135-9.

⁵² 1.34; 1.39-44.

⁵³ See his conclusion to the first book 1.89.1-2.

⁵⁴ Paradoxically, Dionysius insists on this notion of Roman fidelity to the Greek ideal. When the Romans make contact with the historical Greeks during the Pyrrhic war, they are affected by corruption. See the recent discussion by Peirano 2010: 32-53.

accorded greater respect to the province than to other areas.⁵⁵ We should view the Arcadian origins in the myth of Evander from the same perspective.

Dionysius describes the advent of Evander to Italy in three passages.⁵⁶ As in Ovid, Evander is said to have been inspired by his mother. He was received by Faunus, the king of the Aborigines, an earthly version of the god of the Lupercalia. They settled on the Palatine and called it Pallantium, after the city in Arcadia. The Arcadians then instituted the Lupercalia, in honour of their supreme god Pan. Dionysius adds that they also instituted other rites, such as those of Ceres (Cerialia), equestrian Neptune (Consualia), and πολλά δὲ καὶ ἄλλα τεμένη καὶ βωμοὺς καὶ βρέτη θεῶν καθωσίωσαν, ἀγισμοὺς τε καὶ θυσίας κατεστήσαντο πατρῴους.⁵⁷ The Arcadians are also responsible for introducing Greek letters and musical instruments.⁵⁸ Thus, Dionysius indiscriminately qualifies as Arcadian all elements that he perceived to be Greek in Rome.⁵⁹ The ritual they first established was the Lupercalia, dedicated to τῷ Λυκαίῳ Πανί.⁶⁰ As opposed to most of Dionysius' other claims, the connection between the Lupercalia and Evander is demonstrably very old: we can date the earliest attestations to the mid-third century BC, found in the commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus*, in a passage where the scholiast discusses the Sibyls:⁶¹

Τετάρτη Ἰταλική, ἡ ἐν ἐρημίᾳ τῆς Ἰταλίας τὴν διατριβὴν λαχοῦσα· ἥς υἱὸς Εὐάνδρος ὁ τὸ ἐν Ῥώμῃ τοῦ Πανός ἱερὸν τὸ καλούμενον Λούπερκον κτίσας· περὶ ἧς ἔγραψεν Ἐρατοσθένης.

The fourth was the Italian (Sybil), who happened to spend her life in the wilderness of Italy. Her son Evander was the one who founded in Rome the sanctuary of Pan which is called Luperkon. Eratosthenes wrote about her.

⁵⁵ Paus. 8.8.3 and Strab. 8.1.3. See Delcourt 2005: 143-6.

⁵⁶ 1.31.1-3.

⁵⁷ 1.33.3.

⁵⁸ 1.33.4.

⁵⁹ Ceres was introduced to Rome in the early Republican period from Magna Graecia (Le Bonniec 1958). It is common knowledge that the alphabet was introduced to Rome through the mediation of the Etruscans (Wallace 1989: 121-135).

⁶⁰ 1.32.3.

⁶¹ Schol. Plat. *Phaedrus* 244b (Ruhnken p. 61).

As Wiseman points out, this testimony agrees well with that of Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromateis*, who was probably also drawing on Eratosthenes.⁶²

Fabius Pictor, one of Dionysius' sources, also lived in the third century BC. He is considered to be the first Roman historian, and he wrote in Greek in order to present Roman history to a wider Mediterranean audience.⁶³ Fabius gave an account of the foundation myth and called the Luperical 'spelunca Martis'.⁶⁴ He may have already referred to Evander's settlement on the Palatine, but this is far from certain because Fabius' account is transmitted by the biased Dionysius.⁶⁵ A more reliable indication comes from Servius, who says that the historian Cincius Alimentus (Fabius' contemporary) links Evander and Faunus: *Cincius et Cassius aiunt ab Euandro Faunum deum appellatum*.⁶⁶ Also, both Cincius and Fabius seem to have attributed the introduction of Greek letters to Evander.⁶⁷ In the next generation, Cato the Elder certainly referred to Evander in his *Origines*.⁶⁸

The myth of Evander is thus a staple of Roman historical tradition and can be traced to its very beginnings. Based on the testimony of the earliest historians, Wiseman concludes the myth was current in the third century BC, but his hypothesis that Pan was introduced into the Luperical cult in the early fourth century BC is completely unfounded.⁶⁹ If anything, the early testimony makes it clear that the god of the ritual is Faunus. We have good historical reports on the introduction of Greek gods into Roman religion in the third century (Asclepius and Magna Mater), and even going as far back as the Dioscuri in the fifth, but no indication of Pan. Greek

⁶² Wiseman 1995a: 3 citing *Strom.* 1.108.3: 3 ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἄλλη Ἐρυθραία Ἡροφίλη καλουμένη· μέμνηται τούτων Ἡρακλείδης ὁ Ποντικὸς ἐν τῷ Περὶ χρησθησίων. ἐὼ δὲ τὴν Αἰγυπτίαν καὶ τὴν Ἰταλίαν, ἣ τὸ ἐν Ῥώμῃ Κάρομαλον ὄκησεν, ἧς υἱὸς Εὐάνδρος ὁ τὸ ἐν Ῥώμῃ τοῦ Πανὸς ἱερὸν τὸ Λουπέργιον καλούμενον κτίσας.

⁶³ See now *FRHist* 1.160-78.

⁶⁴ *Serv. Aen.* 8.630 = *FRHist* 2.100, Fab. F29 (see above p. 53, n. 22).

⁶⁵ *Ant. Rom.* 1.79 = *FRHist* 2.52-7 (Fab. F4). The editors of *FRHist* (3.43) take the reference to Evander to be Dionysius' own gloss.

⁶⁶ *G.* 1.10 = *FRHist* 2.120, Cinc. F10.

⁶⁷ *FRHist* 2.100, Fab. F27; *FRHist* 2.118-9, Cincius F9. For reasons to list these under 'possible fragments' see *FRHist* 3.42-4, 57.

⁶⁸ *FRHist* 2.154, 192 (Cato F3, F61), 3.64-5, 111.

⁶⁹ 1995a: 3-5.

sources that refer to Faunus as Pan in the context of the Lupercalia apply a standard of *interpretatio Graeca* that identified Zeus with Jupiter (and Hera with Juno, etc.) at least as far back as Livius Andronicus.⁷⁰ But the earliest Latin source to conflate Faunus and Pan is in fact Horace.⁷¹

But who is Evander, and how did he get to Rome? We have seen that Eratosthenes makes him the son of an Italian Sybil. This Sybil is most probably the one mentioned by historians Acilius and Piso as residing in Cimmerium, situated next to lake Avernus in the bay of Naples.⁷² As Wiseman points out, this imaginary place owes its existence to the identification of lake Avernus with Odysseus' visit to the dead in 'the land and city of the Cimmerians'.⁷³ Varro lists the Cimmerian and the Cumaean sybils separately, but there might have been some confusion when Piso was writing, owing to both the similarity of names and the proximity of places.⁷⁴ Evander was then imported to Rome, his mother assimilated with Carmentis, a prophetic goddess in the Italic tradition. The name for the part of the Palatine where the Lupercal is situated, Cermalus, might have helped in the process. Magna Graecia is the farthest we can safely trace Evander. Hesiod only mentions Evander as the son of Echemos, a hero of Tegea, city in Arcadia.⁷⁵ Echemos is also mentioned by the Sicilian poet Stesichorus, which might support the notion of Evander's presence in Southern Italy.⁷⁶

We can only speculate as to the date of his arrival in Rome. The Greek sources of the fifth and fourth century BC attributed Greek origins to Rome without

⁷⁰ Feeney 2007: 130-1. Further critique of Wiseman and more on Faunus in chapter 3.2.

⁷¹ Ennius already spoke of Fauni, and Lucretius kept Pan and Fauni separate (see Stroh 1999: 564-83, with references).

⁷² *FRHist.* 2.280, 298. Lact. 1.6.9; Plin. *HN.* 3.61; Paul. *Fest.* 37L; *Oracula Sibyllina* P 39-40.

⁷³ *Od.* 11.13-9; Wiseman 1995a: 3.

⁷⁴ *FRHist* 3.196; Forsythe 1994: 104-7.

⁷⁵ But this is only mentioned by Servius *Aen.* 8.130=Merkelbach and West F168. In Pindar (*Ol.* 10.66) we find Echemos with Hercules at the first Olympic games. He is also referred to as the defender of Arcadia against the Heraclids (Schol. *Pind. Ol.* 10.79; Merkelbach and West F23A). *RE* (s.v. Euandros) lists many later figures named Evander, including a philosopher and an Athenian archon.

⁷⁶ Schol. *Eur. Or.* 249=Merkelbach and West F176A. See Martin 1974: 142-3.

ever referring to Arcadians.⁷⁷ The process of establishing Greek origins for a particular non-Greek nation usually involved a derivation of this people from a famous Homeric hero.⁷⁸ This was a common way of appropriating cultural capital across the Mediterranean, and it is hardly surprising that Rome also had its ‘return of Odysseus’ as Malkin famously calls it.⁷⁹ However, as most of the Italian peninsula, Latium included, was already familiar with the myth of Aeneas, this prevailed over the Odysseus’ tradition to become a mainstream Roman foundation myth. Delcourt has argued that the ambivalence of the Aeneas myth caused the Romans to adopt an alternative in the early third century. According to Pausanias Pyrrhus invoked Achilles as his ancestor to fight the descendants of Trojans.⁸⁰ The myth of Trojan heritage thus proved to be ambivalent: while placing the Romans in the Greek cultural sphere, it could be simultaneously cited as evidence of Roman hostility towards Greeks. Delcourt concludes that the adoption of Evander reflects the need for another foundation myth to firmly secure Roman origins in Hellenistic Mediterranean of the third century BC.⁸¹

This is certainly an appropriate time, but there might have been others, and I am always wary of synchronic interpretations, whether Wiseman’s or Delcourt’s.⁸² Malkin rightly warns against this procedure, using the example of the Promised Land in the myth of Abraham and Jewish history: the most opportune time for Jews to avail themselves of this myth would be the twentieth century. When our civilisation collapses, imagine historians of future millennia using snippets of Jewish history to

⁷⁷ Already in the fifth century BC Hellanicus of Lesbos mentions Aeneas (see n. 79 below). In the fourth century, Heraclides of Pontus refers to Rome as a Greek city, and Aristotle knows of the Gallic sack. In 295 BC king Demetrius speaks of Greek kinship with Rome with reference to the temple of the Dioscuri (see Delcourt 2005: 85-98).

⁷⁸ In the Greek world elaborate divine (and heroic) genealogies were invented for political purposes. See Jones 1999.

⁷⁹ On Odysseus in Italy see Malkin 1998: 178-209. Hellanicus coupled Odysseus and Aeneas as founders of Rome in the fifth century BC: Dion. Hal. 1.72.2=Hellan. *FGrHist* 4 F 84. The two also appear in the *Theogony* (see p. 231).

⁸⁰ 1.12.1.

⁸¹ Delcourt 2005: 98-100.

⁸² See Vuković 2014: 145-54.

surmise that the promise was interpolated in the Abraham myth in the 20th century to serve contemporary political needs. They would not know that the myth is at least 25 centuries older, just as we know so little about the early history of Rome.⁸³ The Romans could re-emphasise the myth of Evander in the 3rd century, but the story might well be older. Martin attempts to trace it back to the Greek settlements in Italy of Mycenaean times.⁸⁴

We can hardly go that far, but one should note that there is good archaeological evidence that Hercules was in Rome already in the 6th century BC.⁸⁵ Evander is usually credited with welcoming Hercules to the site of Rome, and he is in the background of the slaying of Cacus. The myth of Cacus was not simply a Greek import: Woodard has recently found close parallels across the Indo-European world.⁸⁶ The process of borrowing is never a one-way street, as Hill points out in his analysis of Greek mythical links to the peoples of Southern Italy.⁸⁷ The native peoples would need an interior motive to adopt a myth that links them to the Greek cultural world. The myth of Evander will also be a result of interaction between Greeks and Romans. The tradition says that Evander welcomed Hercules, and Faunus welcomed Evander.⁸⁸ Liou Gille has pointed to a number of instances where Hercules, Evander and Faunus replace one another in the Roman tradition: Pallas, traditionally the son of Evander, is otherwise the son of Hercules, and Hercules also becomes the father of Latinus.⁸⁹ Hercules even becomes the progenitor of the *gens Fabia*, one of the two Luperi groups.⁹⁰ The connections seem to indicate that the Greek newcomers, Hercules and Evander were adopted into the mythology of Faunus. Bayet argued that

⁸³ Malkin 1998: 206.

⁸⁴ Martin 1974: 132-51.

⁸⁵ Coarelli 1988: 60-106; 164-204; Marcos Casquero 2002: 65-105.

⁸⁶ See M.L. West 2007: 262 and Woodard 2006: 189-230; Woodard 2013 (with Vuković 2014: 145-54).

⁸⁷ J.M. Hill 2011: 259-84.

⁸⁸ Dion. Hal. 1.31, 39-44; Ov. *F.* 1.543-82; Verg. *Aen.* 8.184-305; Prop. 4.9.1-20; Liv. 1.5-7; Strab. 5.3.3; *OGR* 4-5; Justin 43.1.

⁸⁹ Liou Gille 1980: 66-7.

⁹⁰ Barchiesi 1997: 148-50.

Evander was a Greek version of Faunus:⁹¹ king Good Man partly displaced the native king Favourable, as it were. Perhaps it was not all that simple, but Evander and Faunus do share a number of similarities.

Liou Gille stresses the connection between Evander and the Lupercalia,⁹² which seems to reflect Faunus and the Lupercalia. Evander is primarily known as the founder of the festival, and his coupling with the visionary Carmentis reflects Faunus coupling with Fauna.⁹³ Evander was reputed to have brought the Arcadian Pan to Rome because Pan and Faunus share a number of similarities. Both the Greek god and his Latin counterpart are woodland deities, protectors of cattle, and notorious for their sexual exploits.⁹⁴ The Pan Lycaeus that our sources present as an equivalent to Roman Faunus was in fact the Pan of Mount Lycaeus, whose temple was adjacent to the sanctuary of Zeus Lycaeus, infamous for the phenomena of lycanthropy and human sacrifice.⁹⁵ Burkert has argued that these elements are symbolic and fit the pattern of an initiation ritual. We have seen that the Lupercalia has links with wolves, and it also fits the profile of an Indo-European warrior initiation.⁹⁶ Such typological elements in common facilitated an identification of the Arcadian with the Roman cult.

Topography plays a key role in Roman mythology, and the myth of Evander is no exception. The Lupercal is in close proximity to Hercules' *ara maxima*,⁹⁷ and mythologies of both cults focus on a cave, either that of Cacus or the she-wolf.⁹⁸ Evander was involved in the the foundation of both cults and settled on the Palatine

⁹¹ Schwegler was the first to propose that Evander was a Greek translation of Faunus based on the idea of *favēre* (1853: 1.351). See Bayet 1920: 73; Martin 1974: 143.

⁹² 1980: 75-81.

⁹³ On whom see pp. 247-8.

⁹⁴ Borgeaud 1988.

⁹⁵ See Burkert 1983: 84-93; Borgeaud 1988: 34-42; Buxton 1987: 60-79.

⁹⁶ See chapters 1.3 and 3.1.

⁹⁷ Which was only one of several cult places dedicated to Hercules in this area. See *LTUR*, s.v. On the Lupercal see pp. 114-7.

⁹⁸ A number of Palatine toponyms show that the myth of Cacus was also localised around the Lupercal: *scalae Caci*, *atrium Caci*, house of Cacus (Coarelli 2012: 191-2).

as the name resembles Pallanteum, a city in Arcadia.⁹⁹ This process of acquiring prestigious Arcadian origins through homonymy is otherwise well attested.¹⁰⁰ As Scheer points out, Arcadia is in fact a land-locked province, and its people took great pride in their autochthony. They were the least likely to found colonies, but Arcadia's pastoral profile and ancient pedigree (as we have seen in Dionysius) made it a perfect candidate for cities which needed cultural capital to secure their new position in the wider Mediterranean world.

To conclude, the myth of Evander carries a political dimension throughout its history. The Augustan poets used it to express different political views, and the historian Dionysius used it as key evidence in his theory of the Greek origins of Rome. The tradition that he was expanding on is evidently old, but attempts to pinpoint the date may only lead to speculation. Evander is primarily a figure associated with Hercules and Faunus, who welcomed the Greek newcomers into his mythological and ritual complex, not least the festival of the Lupercalia. The process of interaction resulted in Hercules and Evander becoming essential parts of Roman mythology and religion. Evander settled on the Palatine, as it resembled the Arcadian Pallanteum, and founded a wolf-ritual that resembled the wolves of the Arcadian Zeus Lycaeus. Evander is a myth that mediates between Greek cultural import and native Roman religion. The great antiquity to which it points testifies to the fact that the festival is very old, which will find corroboration in section three.

⁹⁹ The etymology that derived Palatium from *balare* (bleat) was still advocated by Gnaeus Naevius in the second century BC and Varro (*Ling.* 5.53) transmitted both the concurrent traditions (Bayet 1920: 70-2).

¹⁰⁰ Scheer (2011: 11-25) discusses eight different cities which Pausanias listed as Arcadian colonies in the Mediterranean. Most of them acquired Arcadian origin through homonymy.

1.5 Caesar and the Lupercalia

In February of the year 44 BC, at the high point of Caesar's dictatorship, the most famous celebration of the Lupercalia took place. Most of our historical sources stress the importance of this event in Caesar's rule. It is presented as one of the main factors that led to his assassination on the Ides of March. Interest in this event is one of the main reasons why our sources supply us with information on the Lupercalia in general. If the Lupercalia is better attested than most Roman festivals, this it owes not only to its long duration and singular character, but also to the political importance of this particular celebration in Roman history. The persons present were indeed no small characters. While Caesar and Mark Antony were actors in the celebration, Cicero himself was an observer. Let us then first examine what the orator reported as a first hand witness:¹

Sed ne forte ex multis rebus gestis M. Antoni rem unam pulcherrimam transiliat oratio, ad Lupercalia veniamus... Sedebat in rostris conlega tuus amictus toga purpurea, in sella aurea, coronatus. Escendis, accedis ad sellam – ita eras Lupercus ut te consulem esse meminisse deberes – diadema ostendis. Gemitus toto foro. Vnde diadema? Non enim abiectum sustuleras, sed attuleras domo meditatam et cogitatum scelus. Tu diadema imponebas cum plangore populi; ille cum plausu reiciebat. Tu ergo unus, scelerate, inventus es qui cum auctor regni esses, eumque quem conlegam habebas dominum habere velles, idem temptares quid populus Romanus ferre et pati posset.

However, so that my speech would not omit the one most beautiful deed from the many deeds of Mark Antony, let us turn to the Lupercalia... Your colleague was sitting on the rostra, girt with a purple toga, in a golden chair, crowned. You climbed up and approached the chair (so you were a Lupercus, but you should have remembered that you were a consul), you displayed a diadem. Groans spread throughout the forum. Where did you get a diadem? You had not picked up one from the ground, but you had brought from home this premeditated and preconcerted crime. You were putting on the crown to public groans, he was rejecting it to applause. Therefore you, vile man, were found to be the one proponent of kingship (you wanted to have as your master the man who was your colleague) and the one to test what the Roman people could suffer and endure.

In his acrimonious diatribe against Antony, Cicero presents the celebration of Lupercalia as an illustration of Antony's moral corruption, and as crown evidence of

¹ Cic. *Phil.* 2.84-5.

his crimes against the Republic. The event is introduced with an ironic superlative (the most beautiful deed), and the sequence of short, vivid images would have made an impressive and memorable speech, if it had been ever delivered.² What is equally memorable is the fascination with the event itself, which Cicero narrates in a condensed form, as his fellow senators would no doubt be familiar with what had happened. If the event was common knowledge, special attention is to be paid to the way Cicero chose to remind his audience of it. Let us see what a close reading can reveal. Caesar, dressed in a purple robe, was sitting in a golden chair and (the main point comes at the end) he was crowned. Caesar was already wearing a golden crown when Antony offered him a diadem:³ the striking contrast consul—Lupercus is paralleled with Antony's ascending the rostra and his servile *proskynesis* a few sentences later. The ending is again marked out to present the most important information (*diadema ostendis*) and goes back to the end of the previous sentence (*coronatus*) connecting the golden crown, which did not yet signify royal power, with the diadem, which did so unambiguously. Thus, the most abominable crime in the eyes of a republican is revealed to be Antony's doing.

After a short reference to disapproval (*gemitus toto foro*), Cicero points to the evidence that this was a premeditated and well-considered plan. The contrast between Antony's offering of the crown and Caesar's refusal is qualified by contrasting reactions of the people, the former causing lamentation, and the latter approval. Antony's crime is then explicitly revealed to be the most dreaded offence against the Roman republic—the restoration of kingship, and he as the *sceleratus... auctor regni*. As if the politician who so often boasted himself of his republican ideals

² The speech was never in fact delivered. It was probably published in November 44 BC, but composed as if for delivery on 19 September, in reply to an attack Antony made that day (Shackleton Bailey 1986: 31).

³ On the golden crown and the diadem see below, pp. 102-3.

and his attempts to save the republic had not been clear enough, Cicero continues in a caustic vein by comparing Antony to a slave:⁴

At etiam misericordiam captabas: supplex te ad pedes abiciebas. Quid petens? ut servires? Tibi uni peteres qui ita a puero vixeras ut omnia paterere, ut facile servires; a nobis populoque Romano mandatum id certe non habebas. O praeclaram illam eloquentiam tuam, cum es nudus contionatus! Quid hoc turpius, quid foedius, quid suppliciiis omnibus dignius? Num exspectas dum te stimulis fodiamus? Haec te, si ullam partem habes sensus, lacerat, haec cruentat oratio.

And you were also wanting to move pity: you were throwing yourself at his feet like a supplicant. What did you ask of him? To be a slave? It is only for yourself that you would be seeking this because, since you were a boy, you lived in such a way that you could suffer everything, and could be a slave easily. From us and the people of Rome you received no such commission. O that glorious eloquence of yours when you addressed the people naked! What is more shameful than this, what more unseemly, what more worthy of every punishment? Are you waiting for us to goad you? If you have any sense at all, this speech must tear at you, it must draw your blood.

The repetition of the verb *servire* evokes *servus*, the alleged occupation of Antony from his childhood. The point not to be missed is that this comparison again hinges on a contrast, just like the rest of Cicero's attack. In this case, the contrast is between Caesar as the supposed king and Antony as the slave down at his feet.⁵ The consul—Lupercus' opposition from above is reiterated implicitly through the word *contionatus*, which implies an address to the people as a magistrate, a consul in fact, who should not be seen naked.⁶ Cicero reminds his audience of the history of the republic, all of which Antony trampled on:⁷

Vereor ne imminuam summorum virorum gloriam; dicam tamen dolore commotus. Quid indignius quam vivere eum qui imposuerit diadema, cum omnes fateantur iure interfectum esse qui abiecerit? At etiam ascribi iussit in fastis ad Lupercalia: C. Caesari, dictatori perpetuo, M. Antonium consulem populi iussu regnum detulisse; Caesarem uti noluisse. Iam iam minime miror te otium perturbare; non modo urbem odisse sed etiam lucem; cum perditissimis latronibus non solum de die sed etiam in diem bibere. Vbi enim tu in pace consistes? qui locus tibi in legibus et in iudiciis esse potest, quae tu, quantum in te fuit, dominatu regio sustulisti? Ideone L. Tarquinius exactus,

⁴ *Phil.* 2.86.

⁵ This was most likely an act of *proskynesis* following the tradition of Hellenistic kings (Ramsey 2003: *ad loc.*).

⁶ Ramsey 2003: *ad loc.*

⁷ *Phil.* 2.86-7.

Sp. Cassius, Sp. Maelius, M. Manlius necati ut multis post saeculis a M. Antonio, quod fas non est, rex Romae constitueretur?

I fear to diminish the glory of the greatest men. Still, I shall say this moved with pain. What is more scandalous than that the one who offered the diadem should live while everyone admits that the one who rejected it was rightly killed? And he also ordered a note to be added to the Fasti on the Lupercalia: that Mark Antony the consul by order of the people offered kingship to Gaius Caesar, perpetual dictator, and that Caesar refused to take it. Now I am not at all surprised that you are disrupting peace, for not only do you hate the city but light as well; you drink with the most dissolute bandits not only from early on in the day but also daily. Where will you find a refuge in peace? What place could there be for you amongst laws and courts, which you, as much as you could, destroyed by invoking kingly power? Was this why Lucius Tarquinius was expelled, Spurius Cassius, Spurius Maelius, Marcus Manlius were killed so that many centuries later Marcus Antonius would unlawfully restore a king to Rome?

Moving from logical arguments to personal traits just as in the previous passage, Cicero turns to *argumenta ad hominem*: Antony is an alcoholic and law-breaker. However, the latter point is qualified by a logical turn: if Antony chose to dispense with the republic itself, he has *ipso facto* broken all its laws. The subject of the entire scene is then restated with a historical reminder. By attempting to re-establish kingship, Antony was breaking both temporal and spatial boundaries (*urbem, legibus, iudiciis*), trampling on the long history of the republic and its constitutional norms. Finally, the ‘dirty word’ *rex* itself appears for the first time, as the culmination of the entire argument.

Cicero’s perception of the celebration is thus unambiguous and it was not only his. He would not have this scene centring on the restoration of kingship, if he did not expect it to be so perceived by both his potential senatorial audience and the readership that the publication of this Philippic addressed. Later, in a letter dated on the Lupercalia, he writes: *Data Lupercalibus, quo die Antonius Caesari* without finishing the sentence. Quintilian explained the sentence as left unfinished for dramatic effect because the ending can be easily surmised by anyone: *diadema*

imposuit.⁸ But we can also say it more clearly: *regnum offerebat*.⁹ It was thus generally understood what happened during this celebration of the Lupercalia, and there is no reason to suspect the main points of Cicero's description of the event in the second Philippic, which he will also summarily reiterate in the third Philippic.¹⁰

However, Cicero's rhetoric is another matter. We should not go so far as to take Cicero for granted, as Welwei seems to have done, arguing that the celebration could never serve the restoration of kingship because it must have been a shameful and laughable occasion.¹¹ Cicero's speech was intended as an attack against Antony, and thus he expectedly uses all means possible to portray him as both corrupt and repulsive. The indecency of a consul is framed through Cicero's portrayal of Antony as servile, drunk and naked. He opened his discussion of the Lupercalia by describing Antony as sweating and vomiting in the *porticus Minucia*.¹² However, Welwei's bold claim that the Lupercalia itself was an unsuitable framework for the restoration of kingship is an ahistorical projection, as any such claim requires ancient rather than modern comparanda. There is in fact no reason why the Lupercalia might not be a suitable occasion for an experiment, the hilarity of the festival inducing the people's good mood rather than aversion to unexpected proposals.¹³

A somewhat different view of the Lupercalia is to be found in Dio Cassius' *Roman Histories*. He dedicates much of his book 45 to Cicero's speech against

⁸ The figure is called aposiopesis, and Quintilian cites (*Inst. Orat.* 9.3.61-2) this as an example: *Ego ne illud quidem aposiopesin semper uoco, in quo res quaecumque relinquitur intellegenda, ut ea quae in epistulis Cicero: 'data Lupercalibus, quo die Antonius Caesari.' Non enim opticit: lusit, quia nihil aliud intellegi poterat quam hoc: 'diadema imposuit'.*

⁹ I owe this point to C.B.R. Pelling.

¹⁰ Performed in late December of 44BC.: *Nec vero M. Antonium consulem post Lupercalia debuistis putare: quo enim illo die, populo Romano inspectante, nudus, unctus, ebrius est contionatus et id egit ut conlegae diadema imponeret, eo die se non modo consulatu sed etiam libertate abdicavit.* (Cic. *Phil.* 3.12.7). Cicero will return to the Lupercalia in passing remarks several times in the *Philippics*, mostly to reiterate his indignation at Antony: 5.38, 7.1, 10.7, 13.17, 13.31, 13.41. See Manuwald 2007: *ad loc.*

¹¹ Welwei 1967: 75.

¹² This I skipped in my first citation in order to start *in medias res*: *Non dissimulat, patres conscripti: apparet esse commotum; sudat, pallet. Quidlibet, modo ne nauseet, faciat quod in porticu Minucia fecit. Quae potest esse turpitudinis tantae defensio? Cupio audire, ut videam ubi rhetoris sit tanta merces, ubi campus Leontinus appareat.* (*Phil.* 2.84 with Ramsey: *ad loc.*).

¹³ On this aspect of the festival see chapter 2.3.

Antony (18-47), in which the same portrayal of his character recurs, and chapters 30-2 closely correspond to the cited passage from the *Philippics*. In Dio's version, Cicero confronts the possible objection to his criticism of Antony's nudity: 'but it was the Lupercalia, and he was in charge of the Julian college'.¹⁴ Dio picks up on Cicero's refutation by contrast, with a reminder that Antony was also consul and that without his shameful action, 'the Lupercalia would not lose its due reverence'.¹⁵ In fact, Cicero must have known that the nudity was a ritual requirement, and he could not legally dispute Antony's position as the head of *Luperci Juliani*.¹⁶ This was a new college of the *Luperci* that Caesar had established in his guise as *pontifex maximus*.¹⁷

Dio has Fufius Calenus use this weakness in Cicero's argument when defending Antony in a long speech.¹⁸ After dismissing Cicero's *argumenta ad hominem* and producing some of his own, Calenus defends Antony's behaviour by portraying the Lupercalia as a deliberate experiment that Antony devised so as to dissuade Caesar from any wish for tyranny.¹⁹ In a rhetorical twist, Calenus states that the plan was never to crown Caesar, but to make him reflect and discourage any wish for kingship. Moreover, Caesar would 'be safely chastened in the relaxation of his spirit and joy of the occasion'²⁰ and the Lupercalia would remind him of Romulus just as Antony's consulship would symbolise all the great republican consuls.

Dio's account arouses even more scepticism than Cicero's. Writing more than two centuries after the events had taken place, Dio was using various different

¹⁴ τὰ γὰρ Λυκαῖα ἦν, καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐταιρικοῦ τοῦ Ἰουλίου ἐτέτακτο.

¹⁵ τὰ μὲν γὰρ Λυκαῖα καὶ ἄλλως ἂν τῆς προσηκούσης θρησκείας οὐκ ἀπέτυχε.

¹⁶ North 2008: 147.

¹⁷ Dio lists the fraternity among the honours bestowed by the senate, and Ferriès follows suit (2009: 384-5). I am more inclined to take the view that Caesar introduced it as *pontifex maximus* amongst many other religious reforms (see below, p. 105-7). Suetonius says Augustus (*Aug.* 31) reinstated the Lupercalia as *pontifex maximus*. In any case, the decision could hardly pass without Caesar's approval.

¹⁸ 45.1.28.

¹⁹ The somewhat complex issue of the *vectigalia Iuliana* is also discussed here. The real Cicero mentions it in *Phil.* 13.31: '*Vectigalia Iuliana Lupercis ademistis.*' *Lupercorum mentionem facere audet?* These seemed to have been taxes raised in favour of the *Luperci*. While most commentators assumed this was an action of Caesar's, Ferriès (2009: 385-7) is right to point out that Antony introduced it after Caesar's death backing it with the authority of Caesar's papers. They were consequently revoked by early 43 BC, as Cicero indicates here. See also North and McLynn 2008: 176.

²⁰ 46.19.6.

historical sources and combined them to suit his own purposes, one of which was evidently to malign Cicero.²¹ According to Millar, Dio produced these two speeches so that they would reflect the complex political situation of 43 BC. If for Cicero's speech he was relying on his reading of the *Phillipics* (as correspondences show), for that of Calenus he had various works of anti-Ciceronian literature.²² In both cases, the Lupercalia is used to reflect the political views of the conflicting parties. This is not surprising considering the event's political significance. Whereas Cicero's admission of Antony's function as the captain of Luperci Juliani reflects a real religious aspect of the Lupercalia, Calenus' far-fetched argument is an attempt at twisting the perception of the event, which (were it a real speech) the senators could hardly believe. In fact, 'the relaxation of spirit and joy of the occasion' were much more likely to be the right atmosphere for softening the crowds than for 'safely chastening' Caesar.

In any case, Dio's account, no matter how fictitious, reinforces Cicero's testimony on the Lupercalia as a subject of political contention even after the celebration took place. It also affirms our conclusion that one should focus more on the description of events than the rhetoric and commentary in both primary and secondary sources. Cicero's description of the event is supported by secondary sources, most of which were written in the second century AD. I shall survey them here in order to clarify their historical perspective.

In Plutarch's *Life of Caesar*, the celebration of the Lupercalia occupies a central place in the development of the narrative. Plutarch strives to explain the motivation for the conspiracy through Caesar's behaviour, the reaction of the people and the senatorial conspirators. After the battle of Munda in March 45 BC (the final battle of the civil war), Caesar returned to Rome to rule undisturbed as dictator for

²¹ Millar 1964: 46-55.

²² He was probably also drawing on Asinius Pollio, Caesar's comrade in arms whose history of the Civil war is lost. See Pelling 2011: 448 (with references).

ten years. The senate lavishly endowed him with numerous honours while he assumed a mild aspect, pardoning many who fought against him and even rewarding the nobles with positions and honours. He also wooed the people with his clemency and generosity, wishing to rule over ‘willing subjects’.²³ Although Plutarch characterises Caesar’s overall behaviour at the time as ‘unimpeachable’,²⁴ he stresses the envy that his honours awoke in his enemies, and in chapters 60 and 61 goes on to the main reasons that fuelled great resentment. Chapter 60 begins with a clear statement:²⁵

Τὸ δ' ἐμφανὲς μάλιστα μῖσος καὶ θανατηφόρον ἐπ' αὐτὸν ὁ τῆς βασιλείας ἕρως ἐξείργασατο, τοῖς μὲν πολλοῖς αἰτία πρώτη, τοῖς δ' ὑπόλοις πάλαι πρόφασις εὐπρεπεστάτη γενομένη.

But the most visible and lethal hatred of him was facilitated by his passion for royal power; to the people this became the first reason, and to those who harboured their resentment for long it became the most appropriate excuse.

In Plutarch’s view, it was ὁ τῆς βασιλείας ἕρως that facilitated Caesar’s demise by giving his enemies an excuse to act. As Beneker argues,²⁶ passion is an important narrative instrument in the *Lives*, and we should be careful not to take Plutarch’s characterisation for granted. Two occasions are adduced to illustrate Caesar’s passion for monarchy. The first is the festival of the *Feriae Latinae*, when Caesar, returning from Alba was first hailed as king, a title he refused.²⁷ The second is an occasion that occurred in early 44BC when Caesar did not stand up in respect to receive the senators who came to inform him of new ‘extravagant honours’ they had bestowed on him.²⁸ This was perceived as an offence. Finally, on top of these causes came the *Lupercalia*.

Plutarch’s description of the crowning in *Caesar* is very similar to that of Cicero, but he adds that Antony offered the diadem not once but three times, and

²³ *Caes.* 57-9.

²⁴ *Caes.* 57.3. The word is ἀνέγκλητος.

²⁵ *Caes.* 60.1.

²⁶ Beneker 2012: 140-52.

²⁷ *Caes.* 60.3.

²⁸ *Plut. Caes.* 60.4, see Pelling 2011: *ad loc.*

consequently Caesar refused it three times.²⁹ This is the origin of Shakespeare's 'I thrice presented him a kingly crown, which he did thrice refuse' in Antony's famous 'Friends, Romans, countrymen' speech.³⁰ Suetonius also says that Caesar refusal was repeated (*saepius*),³¹ and this may well be the reason why Cicero uses the imperfect (*imponebas, reiciebat*) tense in the passage above.³²

Notably, the three symbols Cicero stressed are also there in both of Plutarch's accounts (in *The Life of Antony* and *The Life of Caesar*): the purple robe, the golden throne and the crown. The other historical sources agree on the coronation attempt at the celebration, but they are at variance as to its conclusion.³³ Even Plutarch himself gives two slightly different versions. In *Antony*, the angry Caesar pulls off the toga from his neck and invites anyone who may wish to strike him on the spot.³⁴ In *Caesar*, this episode follows the offence of the senators rather than Antony's attempt at the Lupercalia.³⁵ In *Caesar*, he sends the diadem off to the Capitol, but in *Antony* it is placed on a nearby statue, causing two tribunes of the people to pull it off and order the men who hailed Caesar as king to be arrested. They are saluted by the people as Bruti (implying the liberator Iunius Brutus), but Caesar deprives them of their office and disparages the appellation by calling them 'Bruti' and 'Cymaeans' (both terms implying stupidity).³⁶

There are other versions that variously present the conclusion of the event. The difficulty lies with the fact that Cicero did not discuss it, so one is left with

²⁹ In *Antony*, Plutarch does not state how many times the attempted crowning was repeated, but only that the struggle went on for some time καὶ πάλιν ὁ Αντώνιος ἐπῆγε, καὶ πάλιν ἐκεῖνος ἀπετείβετο. καὶ πολὺν χρόνον οὕτω διαμαχομένων (*Anton.* 12.3).

³⁰ *Julius Caesar* Act 3, scene 2.

³¹ *neque ex eo infamiam affectati etiam regii nominis discutere valuit, quanquam et plebei regem se salutanti Caesarem se non regem esse responderit et Lupercalibus pro rostris a consule Antonio admotum saepius capiti suo diadema reppulerit atque in Capitolium Iovi Optimo Maximo miserit* (Suet. *Iul.* 79.3).

³² 2.85. See above.

³³ Appian (2.16.109) also has Antony make several attempts, but does not mention Caesar's three symbols like the other sources.

³⁴ *Ant.* 12.3.

³⁵ *Ceas.* 60.4. Pelling (2011: 449) argues that the more plausible version is the one in *Caesar*, pointing out that this could have also been 'a free-floating story' of the dictator's final months.

³⁶ *Caes.* 61.5. This episode should also be dated earlier, as it is in other sources.

secondary sources and their contradictory accounts. Plutarch's version seems to be most similar to that of Suetonius, who has Caesar send off the diadem to the temple of Capitoline Jupiter, stating that he is the only king of Rome.³⁷ This would explain Plutarch's reference to the Capitol, and it is also to be found in Dio Cassius,³⁸ and Nicolaus of Damascus (*Life of Augustus*), an advisor and diplomat of Herod the Great.³⁹

According to the second version in Nicolaus, he threw the diadem into the crowd, Antony collected it and placed it on a nearby statue of Caesar's.⁴⁰ This is close to Plutarch's version from *Antony* where 'the tribunes pulled off a diadem placed on one of his statues',⁴¹ but Plutarch does not say who placed it there. There is good reason to believe that this is a conflation with a previous episode that happened a few weeks before the Lupercalia, according to other sources.⁴² Nicolaus presents a narrative that is in other respects the most peculiar of all the historical accounts. Whereas the other historians wrote in the second century AD, Nicolaus wrote his *Life of Augustus* while the emperor was still alive, but that hardly makes his account more reliable. He is the only source to claim that several men (and not just Antony) participated in the crowning attempt. As the men included the conspirators Cassius and Casca, doubts are rightfully raised: did Nicolaus intend to portray the conspirators as hypocrites?⁴³ Nicolaus is in other respects also unreliable.⁴⁴ When it comes to Roman religion, he is prone to superficial or erroneous statements, such as his claim that the Luperci came from the ranks of both young and old men.⁴⁵

³⁷ See p. 95, n. 31 above.

³⁸ 44.11.2.

³⁹ *Vit. Caes.* 21. Dio adds that Caesar's reply came as a response to Antony's statement: τοῦτό σοι ὁ δῆμος δι' ἐμοῦ δίδωσιν which chimes well with Cicero's *Phil.* 2.86: *M. Antonium consulem populi iussu regnum detulisse...*

⁴⁰ *Vit. Caes.* 21.

⁴¹ *Ant.* 12.7.

⁴² So Pelling (1988: *ad loc* and 2011: 455).

⁴³ See Pelling 2011: 453-4.

⁴⁴ For discussion and references see Toher 2003: 132-56.

⁴⁵ Nic. Dam. *Vit. Caes.* 21. Luperci are regularly styled as young men (*iuvenes*, see pp. 172-6).

The third version is recorded only in the *Periochae* to Livy, and says that Caesar placed the diadem on his *sella*, i.e. the golden throne.⁴⁶ As North observed, this would also be a controversial action.⁴⁷ It would imply Caesar would rather be a god if he cannot be a king, given that the crowns of gods were carried on thrones to signify their presence during processions.⁴⁸

Whatever happened to the diadem, it is important to note that all the sources depict the event as a botched attempt at crowning Caesar. Most of the sources also repeat Cicero's description of Caesar with three characteristic symbols: purple robe, golden throne, and the diadem.⁴⁹ In all the sources, the Lupercalia occupies a central place in explaining the motives of the conspirators. Suetonius and Livy's *Periochae* list it among the causes for jealousy and offence, while for others it is the culmination of events leading to the final stage of the conspiracy (as we saw in Plutarch). Caesar's behaviour after his return from Spain was thus no doubt paramount in leading to his assassination, a view that Lintott's recent analysis also supports.⁵⁰ While one may distrust particular psychological motives our sources list (ἔσθως in Plutarch, *invidia* in Suetonius and Livy's *Periochae*), their reasoning that Caesar's assassination was a consequence of his unprecedented usurpation of republican power is plausible.

After his victory at Thapsus in 46BC, the senate declared Caesar dictator for ten years and from this time there is no doubt that all the major political decisions could not pass without his consent or (in his absence) that of his close associates.⁵¹ In

⁴⁶ *Caesar ex Hispania quintum triumphum egit. et cum plurimi maximique honores a senatu decreti essent, inter quos, ut parens patriae appellaretur et sacrosanctus ac dictator in perpetuum esset, invidiae adversus eum causam praestiterunt, quod senatui deferenti hos honores, cum ante aedem Veneris Genetricis sederet, non adsurrexit, et quod M. Antonio cos., collega suo, inter lupercos currente diadema capiti suo inpositum in sella reposuit, et quod Epidio Marullo et Caesetio Flavio trib. pl. invidiam ei tamquam regnum adfectanti * * * potestas abrogata est. ex his causis conspiratione in eum facta...* (*Periochae* 116.1).

⁴⁷ North 2008: 158.

⁴⁸ Given his divine attributes (see p. 99 below), that would not be surprising. A crown was already exhibited in the Circus on a golden throne during his absence (Dio 44.6).

⁴⁹ Plut. *Caes.* 61; Nic. Dam. *Vit. Caes.* 71; Dio 44.11.2; Appian mentions the throne, but not the robe (2.109.16).

⁵⁰ Lintott 2009: 76-7.

⁵¹ Rawson 1994: 459-60.

the same year, Cicero refers to him as ‘he who controls all power’.⁵² Generally, it can be gleaned from Cicero’s letters that Plutarch was right to portray the state of affairs as ambivalent, with Caesar and the senate mutually bestowing honours on each other, and yet resentment arising with his centralisation of power.⁵³ The mutual conferring of honours was partly motivated by the desire to mitigate the current unease of the civil war, where so many senators fought against Caesar.

After the battle of Munda in April 45 BC, the senate voted extravagant new honours. Suetonius lists these in one chapter and the epitome of Livy gives but a short summary of what must have been a long list given the one in Dio.⁵⁴ Dio’s list does not clearly differentiate between the honours offered by the senate and the honours Caesar accepted,⁵⁵ but Rawson points out that it finds many parallels in coinage and in Cicero’s correspondence.⁵⁶ Many of the honours accepted concerned Caesar’s political position: he was given tribunician sacrosanctity, and awarded the titles of permanent *imperator*, *liberator*, *parens patriae*, sole *ensor* for life, and *dictator in perpetuum*. The latter caused the most controversy as, in Rawson’s words, it was ‘the final slamming of the door on Republican hopes’.⁵⁷ The position of dictator was for the Republic a refuge in times of hardship, awarded in extraordinary circumstances for a maximum of six months. Permanent dictatorship was clearly a tyranny in disguise, as Plutarch implied.⁵⁸ It meant that there was no chance of restoring the Republican order before Caesar’s death.

⁵² *Fam.* 9.16.

⁵³ I cannot hope to portray here the whole of Caesar’s autocracy, which has been the subject of many studies amounting to a vast bibliography. For a brief overview see Cairns and Fantham (2003: 1-19) with references.

⁵⁴ *Div. Iul.* 76; *Periochae* 116 (see p. 97, n. 46 above).

⁵⁵ Dio 44.4-9; Gradel 2004: 71.

⁵⁶ Rawson 1994: 458.

⁵⁷ Rawson 1994: 463.

⁵⁸ *Caes.* 57.1.

Other honours elevated Caesar in terms of both socio-political and religious status, two closely intertwined aspects in the life of Republican Rome.⁵⁹ The senate voted him the permanent right to wear the triumphal garb, granted him a golden throne and ‘the dress the kings once used’,⁶⁰ a sacred couch to be carried in procession (*pulvinar*) with those of the gods.⁶¹ *Luperci Iuliani* were added as a third college to the *Luperci*, and Antony appointed to be their captain.⁶² A temple was decreed to his *Clementia*, although it was never built.⁶³ His statue was erected on the Capitol with the inscription bearing a divine title, which Dio translates as ἡμίθεος.⁶⁴ Finally, the conferring of the title *Divus Iulius* and the appointment of Antony as his *flamen* were used by Cicero as evidence that Caesar practically achieved deification while still alive.⁶⁵

Gradel argues that the unambiguous conferral of divine honours should not be perceived as utterly scandalous.⁶⁶ It was an expression of his power rather than a claim to divine, transcendental status as we are inclined to see it from our modern point of view.⁶⁷ It is an outstanding example of how Roman religion went hand in hand with Roman politics as religious institutions reflected social and political reality rather than spiritual values. Nevertheless, like many other honours, his deification was unprecedented and caused offence. If Caesar did not completely devise its implementation, as *pontifex maximus* he must have had a great role in it. It is

⁵⁹ Discussed in Weinstock 1971: 270-317 and Jehne 1987: 197-220.

⁶⁰ Dio 44.6.1.

⁶¹ Dio’s note (44.6.4) would indicate that the senators also called Caesar *Iuppiter Iulius*, but there he could have misunderstood (or mistranslated) *Divus Iulius* (see North 1975: 174-5; Gradel 2004: 69-72).

⁶² ...ιεροποιούς τε ἐς τὰς τοῦ Πανδῶς γυμνοπαιδίας, τρίτην τινὰ ἑταιρίαν Ἰουλίαν ὀνομάσαντες (Dio 44.6.2). τὰ γὰρ Λυκαῖα ἦν, καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἑταιρικοῦ τοῦ Ἰουλίου ἐτέτακτο... (Dio 45.30.2). Suetonius only says *Luperci* were added as one of his honours (*Iul.* 76.1). Dion. Hal. (1.80.1-3) has the *Luperci* of his myth run in three groups, which might reflect this new division. If I am right on Fabiani and Quinctiales (see p. 55), then the new group was called *Luperci Iuliani*, not ‘*Iulii*’, as many infer. The *Luperci* tax was called *vectigalia Iuliana* (see n. 19 above).

⁶³ On *Clementia* see Weinstock 1971: 236-43; A.J. Clark 2007: 247-8.

⁶⁴ According to Dio (43.21.2), Caesar later had it erased. For a discussion of the title see Gradel (2004: 61-8) who cogently argues the original Latin was *divo Caesari*.

⁶⁵ *Phil.* 2.110: *Quem is honorem maiorem consecutus erat quam ut haberet pulvinar, simulacrum, fastigium, flaminem? est ergo flamen, ut Iovi, ut Marti, ut Quirino, sic Divo Iulio M. Antonius.* Antony was designated, but not inaugurated until 40 BC (Ramsey 2003: *ad loc.*).

⁶⁶ Gradel 2004: 71-2.

⁶⁷ The vexed question of divine in relation to human status has recently become a hotly debated topic. For discussion see Levene 2012: 41-81 and Tatum 2014 (with references).

interesting to observe that, although his status now equalled that of a divinity, this was less controversial than the title of *rex*.⁶⁸ For the exclusion of kingship lies at the very core of the Republican traditional constitution.

The ancients already raised the question to what extent these honours were inspired by him, and to what extent the senators themselves voted either to flatter him or to make him more hated.⁶⁹ I believe that all three possibilities are viable to a certain extent. Regardless of the great control Caesar exercised on political life, it would be impossible to direct all the senatorial decrees. In fact, Dio mentions that he refused some of these,⁷⁰ and that fits well with the alleged offence of the senatorial procession that happened some time in early 44 BC. According to Plutarch, he refused to rise only to note that his honours should be curbed rather than expanded.⁷¹ However, no other source mentions this, and only few honours are recorded to have been refused, so the extent of Caesar's involvement remains open. Caesar's refusal to rise before the senate could be equally viewed as an intentional expression of his power, and one that naturally caused offence.⁷² In any case, once all the extravagant honours, 'human and divine' were heaped on him, Caesar was still missing the crown and title of *rex*, otherwise the Lupercalia incident would make no sense.

If we focus on the events that happened in the last few months of Caesar's life, in early 44BC, an interesting picture emerges. The incident with his statue in the Forum, which we observed Plutarch and Nicolaus conflated with the Lupercalia, was an act of openly royal association. After someone crowned Caesar's statue with a diadem, the tribunes Epidius Marullus and Cassetius Flavus had the man arrested, but Caesar immediately deposed them, although tribunes were sacrosanct under the

⁶⁸ Rawson 1994: 465. Rawson 1975: 148-59 analyses the ambivalent perceptions of kingship in the late Republic.

⁶⁹ Plut. *Caes.* 57.3; Dio 44.7.

⁷⁰ 43.46.

⁷¹ *Caes.* 60.4.

⁷² Weinstock (1971: 275-6) argues the episode was only later projected as a scandal, for Caesar as dictator was never obliged to rise before the senate and the consuls. See also Pelling 2011: 448-9.

law. According to Suetonius, he made the pretext that he was deprived of *gloria recusandi regni*.⁷³

The second incident took place on 26th of January, when he was returning from the celebration of *Feriae Latinae*, in a modified version of the *ovatio* (usually held as a lesser version of the triumph), the crowd hailed him as king, to which he replied his name was Caesar, not Rex. The fact that he was riding from Alba wearing the red boots of Alban kings, in a ceremony that was itself a minor triumph all contributed to this acclamation. Livy indicates that the dictator could by ancient appellation also be called *Albanus rex*.⁷⁴ If that is true, the pun is threefold, as *Rex* would then mean: firstly, the *Albanus rex*, which was perfectly legitimate after the day of the Latin festival, secondly, *Rex* as a Roman cognomen ('my name is Caesar, not Rex'),⁷⁵ and thirdly, the *rex* as a title in the full sense of the word, king of Rome. We should not forget that the context involves Alba, the seat of kings to which Caesar laid ancestral claim as the descendant of Iulus Ascanius.

Both events are presented as a prelude to the Lupercalia coronation, and both involved openly royal associations. The episodes may appear to be *post festum* elaborations on the part of historical sources that knew of the Lupercalia incident. If this was the culmination of events prior to the murder, the two episodes could be used to build up the narrative leading up to the climax at the festival. However, the deposition of tribunes and the Alban episode seem to be based on a historical reality, and Luke has recently argued that they problematise the anomalous position Caesar found himself in as the undisputed autocrat in the Republic.⁷⁶ While the excessive

⁷³ According to Suetonius (*Iul.* 79.1), this happened on his return from the *Feriae Latinae*. Other sources present it as a separate episode, but disagree on whether there was one statue or two: Appian 2.108.449; Plut. *Ant.* 12.7, *Caes.* 61.8; Dio 44.9.2; Nic. Dam. *Vit. Caes.* 69 (See Pelling 2011: 455-6).

⁷⁴ Liv. 1.23.4. The fact that he was riding a horse was also a special privilege as dictators were not allowed to do so and nor did the *ovantes* (Weinstock 1971: 326-31).

⁷⁵ This would imply his descent from the *Marcii Reges*. See Luke 2012: 276-7, pp. 106-7 below.

⁷⁶ Luke 2012: 267-83.

aggregation of honours caused unease, the only title he still lacked was *rex*, which his supreme power naturally evoked.

The festival itself came at the height of this very complex political situation, and events that carried regal associations. The triumphal dress Caesar was wearing and the golden throne he was sitting in at the festival, were granted by the senate before and do not necessarily make a special plea for kingship, although both point in that direction. As Weinstock observed, the consuls' *sella curulis* was made of ivory, but a golden throne was the seat of Hellenistic kings, never awarded to anyone in Rome.⁷⁷ Pelling tried to separate triumphal and ancient royal elements in Caesar's dress, arguing that *toga purpurea* in Cicero's and Dio's descriptions evokes the early kings rather than the *toga picta* of the triumphant general.⁷⁸ However, he later conceded to Beard's conclusion that any such distinction could not be made by contemporary observers.⁷⁹ Whatever the exact connotations were, I believe it is telling that Cicero in his attack juxtaposes these two symbols with the crown for he would have no reason to do so if they could not at least remotely be associated with kingship.⁸⁰ If Caesar himself had the intention of staging a regal scene, he would no doubt be appropriately dressed for it.

When it comes to interpreting his symbols, it was again the diadem that has caused the most controversy. Kraft attempted to demonstrate this was the crown of the ancient Etruscan and Roman kings based on Caesar's portrayal on his coins.⁸¹ This has been called into question and others have argued that it was Hellenistic.⁸² We saw that Cicero in fact used the Greek word *diadema*: by Caesar's time this

⁷⁷ 1971: 273.

⁷⁸ 1988: 145-6

⁷⁹ Pelling 2011: 453; Beard 2007: 276 says: 'At this early period of the new Roman aristocracy, precedents were sought and reinvented in a variety of different registers of power: triumphal, regal, divine.'

⁸⁰ *Phil.* 2.85 (see above) and again in *Div.* 1.119: *Qui cum immolaret illo die, quo primum in sella aurea sedit et cum purpurea veste processit...*

⁸¹ Kraft 1969.

⁸² Rawson 1975: 148-59; Weinstock 1971: 333-40.

symbol of Hellenistic kingship had established itself in Rome. The kings of Rome were depicted wearing diadems on the coins of the late Republic.⁸³ The diadem at the time stood for both Hellenistic and ancient Roman kingship. Thus, as the Etruscan and the Hellenistic traditions were then intertwined, Caesar would not have aimed at any particular one of them while excluding the other.

Based on the descriptions in Dio and Cicero, one can gather that Caesar was already crowned with a golden crown (also one of his honours) to which Antony then added the diadem.⁸⁴ This was a white fillet, a simple headband worn by the Hellenistic kings.⁸⁵ Its message was distinctly clear: the diadem represented kingship and it was evidently so perceived by the people present, not least the senators. The coronation gave the conspirators the best excuse to act before Caesar leaves for the East, and Cicero also used it to argue (albeit *post festum*) that Caesar was rightly killed and to portray Antony as a culprit.⁸⁶ The authenticity of the event can hardly be doubted given all the evidence we listed above where we see Caesar in control of politics. If one is to argue that this event was solely an initiative of Antony, then the fact that Antony was chosen as head of the *Luperci Iuliani*, as well as Caesar's dress and his station on the rostra all become very difficult to account for.⁸⁷ The facts are easily explained if Caesar staged the event, with Antony as his closest collaborator, currently both his fellow consul and designated flamen.

The real question that remains a stumbling block in both ancient and modern scholarship is: was the event staged for the true restoration of kingship or to make it an ostentatious refusal? Was it an experiment (πειρα as Plutarch called it) in which

⁸³ For the examples of Ancus Marcius and Numa Pompilius, see Crawford 1974: n. 425/1 and n. 446/1, respectively.

⁸⁴ Dio 44.11.2. He may have also been wearing the laurel, an honour which the senate awarded him after the battle of Munda, and which Suetonius (*Iul.* 45.2) says was a cause of great joy for him as it covered his bald head. On the other hand, as Pelling points out (2011: 454), Plutarch and Nicolaus speak of Antony offering a diadem with a laurel crown wound around it.

⁸⁵ For the history of the diadem in Rome see Weinstock 1971: 334-6.

⁸⁶ *Phil.* 13.41: *Nam Caesari plura et maiora debentur. Deceptum autem patrem a me dicere audes? Tu, tu, inquam, illum occidisti Lupercalibus: cuius, homo ingratissime, flaminium cur reliquisti?*

⁸⁷ Kraft (1969: 55-8) and Welwei (1967: 67) consider the possibility that Antony somehow fell out of Caesar's grace and was trying to regain it with this singular act.

both options were possible, gauging the mood of the people and the senators to see how far they could go? In recent scholarship, the prevailing opinion is that Caesar wanted to show he had no aspirations for kingship, and that a public refusal of the crown would dispel doubts of tyranny and weaken the conspiracy of the senators, which he might have had reason to suspect.⁸⁸ As we saw, it had the very opposite effect, as the Lupercalia was in fact perceived as the best pretext for the conspirators to act. Also, it is difficult to say whether he suspected a conspiracy, as he seems to have dispelled such notions, refusing the honour of a bodyguard, a mistake that proved to be fatal.⁸⁹

It is easy to believe the argument that Caesar had no reason to make himself king, if he already possessed complete dictatorial power, and the adoption of the title *rex* could cause nothing but offence.⁹⁰ However, as we saw, Caesar was not reluctant to accept new honours that additionally raised his position. Although his power was safe with the position of a dictator for ten years, he still raised it to an indefinite dictatorship.⁹¹ Of course, the title *rex* is very different from any other, as the republican constitution was based on a condemnation of that very position. Scholars have divided on the issue whether or not Caesar was intending a restoration of monarchy. Mommsen was the great founder of the camp that argued Caesar was aiming for the crown, and he was joined by such scholars as Dumézil, Alföldi, Binder, Dobesch and Burkert.⁹² The main representatives of the opposition are Kraft, Welwei, Rawson, Scholz, and recently North.⁹³

⁸⁸ Ferriès 2009: 385; North 2008: 159; Luke 2012: 278-82. Pelling (2011: 451) thinks this is 'probably most likely'.

⁸⁹ Suet. *Iul.* 86; Plut. *Caes.* 57.7; Dio 44.7.4.

⁹⁰ The argument of Rawson 1975: 147-59, among others.

⁹¹ In contrast, Augustus renewed his *imperium* through periods of five or ten years, and so did Tiberius (twice for ten years). See Weinstock 1971: 313-4.

⁹² Dumézil in several works (see n. 119 below); Alföldi 1953: 19-53; Binder 1964: 96-115; Dobesch 1966: 113-33; Burkert 1962: 356-76.

⁹³ The most influential discussion is Welwei 1967: 44-69 (with references). See also Kraft 1969: 39-58; Rawson 1975: 148-59; Scholz 1980: 289-328; North 2008: 159.

The discussion has not been conclusive because the issue ultimately comes down to whether or not Caesar *wanted* to make himself a king. Since we cannot possibly know what Caesar wanted, a certain answer to that question will never be reached. The next, related, and equally important question is why the Lupercalia was chosen for this event, rather than some other occasion. However, the coronation at the Lupercalia can be clarified by placing it in the context of Caesar's actions and especially the political events that immediately preceded this controversial celebration. I shall first briefly examine Caesar's actions in the religious sphere and then return to the associations he made with the Roman kings.

The position of *pontifex maximus*, to which Caesar was elected at the age of 39, was a remarkable achievement for a young politician, and he stayed in this office for the rest of his life. Throughout his military and political career, Caesar demonstrated great awareness and mastery in the area of religion. As a military commander, he would observe all the religious rituals, and play well with the superstitions of his soldiers. Two anecdotes from his campaign in Africa illustrate the fact. In response to a prophecy that said only Scipios could be successful in Africa, he enlisted a minor member of the Scipio family in order to counter his enemy Metellus Scipio.⁹⁴ When he reached the shore and stumbled while disembarking, he turned the omen to his advantage by saying: *Teneo te, Africa*.⁹⁵

His frequent absence on military campaigns prevented him from fully exploiting the benefits of the office. However, pontifical symbols often appeared on his coinage during the Civil war and the inscriptions mention his pontificate more than the magistracies.⁹⁶ After assuming the dictatorship in 46 BC, Caesar gained even greater leverage to perform religious as well as other reforms. The famous calendar

⁹⁴ Plut. *Caes.* 52.2; Dio 42.57.5-58.3.

⁹⁵ Suet. *Iul.* 59.1.

⁹⁶ See Jehne 1987: 163-85.

reforms were introduced at this time, facilitated by his role as *pontifex maximus*.⁹⁷ As the priestly colleges were in great disorder during the civil wars, Caesar imposed order with his *lex Iulia de collegiis* while promoting candidates inclined to his party.⁹⁸

It is in this context that one should view the introduction of the *Luperci Iuliani* and Antony as their *magister*. Again, politically desirable candidates were preferred. Caesar's freedman Salvius was also a *magister Lupercorum* at some point, and it cannot be an accident that another Lupercus from this period, Curtius Hellenus was a freedman of the Caesarian Postumus.⁹⁹ In a letter to Atticus, Cicero mocks his brother Quintus for celebrating the appointment of his son and of his freedman as Luperci.¹⁰⁰ Ferriès suggests that this double honour heaped on Quintus's house was also in line with the Caesarian party, as Quintus fought on Caesar's side in Spain in 45 BC.¹⁰¹ All goes in favour of the conclusion that Caesar was well aware of his power of a *pontifex maximus*, and used it just as much as he did his magisterial positions.¹⁰²

Weinstock conducted the most extensive study of Caesar's activity in the religious sphere. His conclusion was that it was Caesar who carefully set up the basis of what was later to become the fully-fledged cult of *Divus Iulius*, not least through the selection of Antony as his *flamen*. The introduction of the *Luperci Iuliani* goes with a series of other decisions that relate Caesar to his divine and royal ancestry. The addition of divine attributes and connotations already described went in hand with creating a divine image of Caesar relying on his ancestry. Already at the funeral oration for his aunt Julia, he stressed the descent of *gens Iulia* from both Venus and

⁹⁷ Macr. *Sat.* 1.14.13. He also formally introduced the cult of Liber Pater, and extended the privileges of the Jews (see Wardle 2009: 103-5). On the calendar reform see Rüpke 2011: 109-21.

⁹⁸ Suet. *Iul.* 42.4.

⁹⁹ *Année épigraphique* 1899: n. 94; *CIL* VI 32437.

¹⁰⁰ Cic. *Att.* 12.5.1.

¹⁰¹ Ferriès 2009: 382-3.

¹⁰² For a recent overview see Wardle 2009: 101-11.

the Marcii Reges.¹⁰³ This early note blends his divine and regal heritage and can help understand his later actions.

He invested a great deal of effort in building the Forum Iulium with its temple of Venus Genetrix, according to several accounts, his favourite goddess, and through Aeneas, the progenitor of *gens Iulia*.¹⁰⁴ Among the many statues that were erected in his honour, one was placed in the temple of Quirinus, and bore the remarkable title *deo invicto*.¹⁰⁵ Another statue was placed on the Capitol among the seven kings of Rome and that of Brutus. He was also given the privilege of riding in a chariot in Rome, which was otherwise forbidden. Weinstock concludes this was a regal attribute, as was the depiction of his head on coins in 44BC, which was never before done for a living person, but which connected him with the early kings as well as Hellenistic rulers.¹⁰⁶ His house received a pediment, a trait usually reserved for temples and regal palaces.¹⁰⁷

One might dispute particular points in Weinstock's argument, as well as his great reliance on Dio, but there is no doubt that many of Caesar's honours were meant to evoke the early kings, not least Romulus.¹⁰⁸ Quirinus, the deified Romulus, was the model according to which he sought to establish his own deification, although he could not foresee that the mythical model would be followed in the manner of his death.¹⁰⁹ In this context, the Lupercalia coronation emerges as the culmination of royal tendencies.¹¹⁰ We cannot ignore the fact that Caesar was a *pontifex maximus*

¹⁰³ As early as 69 or 68 BC (Suet. *Iul.* 6.1).

¹⁰⁴ The temple was dedicated in 46BC, but the Forum Iulium will be finished only by Augustus (Weinstock 1971: 80-90).

¹⁰⁵ Dio 43.45.3. In procession, his statue was carried next to the statue of Quirinus (Cic. *Att.* 13.28.3).

¹⁰⁶ Weinstock 1971: 275.

¹⁰⁷ Weinstock 1971: 280.

¹⁰⁸ For criticism of Weinstock see e.g. North's review (1975: 171-7) of his book.

¹⁰⁹ Cicero may have anticipated this as he wrote that he prefers Caesar sharing a temple with Quirinus rather than with Salus, perhaps insinuating he would have him die like Romulus (*Att.* 12.45.2).

¹¹⁰ So Weinstock (1971: 326-41), but his supposition that another attempt at kingship was to be performed on the Ides of March is based on the rumour (*falsa quodam hominum fama*, Cic. *Div.* 2.110) that L. Cotta was set to propose that Caesar be made king and supposedly base this on an oracle claiming that Parthia could be taken only by a king.

who consciously used Roman religion as a political tool to his advantage and to promote his position.

The regal insinuations at the crowning of the statues and the Alban procession show that such ideas were in the air at the time. The Lupercalia was a planned and concerted response to these events. Why this day in particular? Was it because Caesar sought legitimacy of the people and simply chose an occasion where a crowd, happy from a joyful celebration, would agree to an extraordinary proposal and sanction a title that was an abomination to the senators and the Roman republic? In his perceptive analysis, North concluded that the choice of the Lupercalia can only be based on the ritual programme of the festival and its mythological connection to the city founders.¹¹¹ We have seen that the festival had an important place in the narrative of the city's foundation,¹¹² which Caesar used to portray himself as the new founder, the new Romulus. The addition of *Luperci Iuliani* tapped into the very core of the foundation legend where the two Luperci colleges represent the groups of Romulus and Remus. Through his own Luperci, Caesar was affirmed as a new founder of the city, a role that was already evoked at the festival of the Parilia, when a celebration of Caesar's victory at Munda became an addition to this traditional birthday of the city.¹¹³ His statue was then carried in procession with that of Quirinus, establishing a firm link between him and the founder.

Romulus, however, was more than just a founder. He was the first king of Rome and in this case the two can hardly be separated. Caesar did not manage to separate them when he used the occasion of the Lupercalia to liken himself to the founder and to play with the crown of a king.¹¹⁴ Thus, Welwei's claim that Caesar merely sought to identify himself with Romulus the founder and not the king is a case

¹¹¹ North 2008: 155-9.

¹¹² Chapter 1.3.

¹¹³ Weinstock 1971: 184-6.

¹¹⁴ It is interesting to notice the similarities between Caesar and Romulus, some of which were not of Caesar's own making. The assassination by the senate was certainly not his idea. Unsurprisingly, the endings of Plutarch's *Romulus* and *Caesar* share many similarities (see Pelling 2011: 34-5).

of artificial separation. Presumably, one could associate oneself with Romulus without going so far as to play with a crown, and all the other regal associations we have enumerated. Caesar's heir, Augustus firmly established his identification with Romulus, but avoided such controversial moves.¹¹⁵ Caesar's connection with Romulus would not only recall the foundation, but inevitably also Romulus' kingship, whether or not Caesar intended it. In his analysis, Burkert did not try to separate the two and rightly thought it a case of 'Gottkönigtum'.¹¹⁶ North partly follows Welwei by concluding that there was nothing in the ritual programme to suggest a coronation ritual. He goes so far as to state that 'Caesar would have had to be out of his senses to use this particular ritual to provide him with a ritual of coronation'.¹¹⁷ Perhaps we should not call it a ritual, but all the sources unanimously say that the celebration of the Lupercalia in 44BC involved a coronation. His refusal was even inscribed in the *Fasti*.

As we saw, the Lupercalia comes as the high point of honours and events that carried regal associations. My point is that there could be a reason why this particular day was chosen for a coronation even if it was meant to be a refusal all along. The atmosphere of fun and festivity is certainly a part of the reason. Large crowds of people would gather to see the Luperci on their route, but especially at the Forum.¹¹⁸ Caesar knew that he could peacefully sit on the rostra and wait for Mark Antony to emerge with the other Luperci. He could use the central location to make a clear statement in front of the leading senators and the people at large. Given the unprecedented honours he had received, there must have been talk of the possibility of kingship, and the preceding episodes represent this sentiment (whether or not we take them for granted). I am inclined to agree with recent scholarship that this put

¹¹⁵ He contemplated taking the name Romulus (Suet. *Aug.* 7), but chose Augustus instead. Twelve vultures were said to appear to him at his first augury (Suet. *Aug.* 95) and he set his Palatine *domus* in a spatial complex that was imbued with the memory of the foundation myth (see pp. 114-6). Ovid (*F.* 2.133-44) risks an ambiguous comparison (see Robinson 2011: *ad loc.*).

¹¹⁶ Burkert 1962: 356-76.

¹¹⁷ North 2008: 159.

¹¹⁸ On this aspect of the festival see the next chapter.

Caesar in an awkward position, which required him to act and give a definitive statement on the matter, such as the one ‘set in stone’ of the *Fasti*. In this respect, the Lupercalia was ideal as thousands were out to witness it.

The ritual recalled the foundation in Roman cultural memory, and Caesar chose to capitalise on this fact. But was there more that would justify using the day as a coronation? As *pontifex maximus* who took great interest in religious matters, Caesar would have known about a tradition that linked the Lupercalia with coronation, but we have no Roman evidence that it existed. Only strong corroboration from comparative religion would be able to demonstrate this. Dumézil repeatedly suggested that the Lupercalia could have been a ritual of royal initiation.¹¹⁹ I shall return to explore this option in the comparative section, as I believe it deserves serious consideration, rather than simply a curt rejection that it usually attracts from scholars.¹²⁰

We may draw several conclusions from this historical celebration of the Lupercalia in 44BC. There can be no doubt that the ritual was an extremely vibrant and lively celebration, attended by masses of people who perceived it in more than one way, which we have addressed as aspects of the festival: purification, fertility, but also entertainment. At the same time, it recalled the memory of the mythical foundation, in which Caesar consistently sought to inscribe his name. As a public festival in Republican Roman religion, it was inseparable from the social and political life of the city. Caesar skilfully availed himself of this opportunity to issue a definitive statement on the nature of his power, a matter that was weighing down on him heavily in those final months, and would result in his assassination. He staged the event so that Antony offers him a regal crown, and he could gauge the reaction of the masses to the offer. Whether or not he had intended a refusal all along may never be known

¹¹⁹ Dumézil 1929: 219; 1970a: 346-50; 1975: 157-60.

¹²⁰ See heading 3.3.2.

for certain. We do well to humbly recognise that the psychological motivation which our sources impute to Caesar is ultimately beyond our reach.

Section 2: The Lupercalia in Context

2.1 Topography

Ancient sources present the running ritual of the Luperci as the most prominent feature of the Lupercalia, so an attempt to trace their course is required in order to position the festival and its rituals in the topography of ancient Rome. Mapping this route has been a contentious topic in modern scholarship, and is always closely connected to the way particular scholars perceive lustrations. As Beard argues in her recent book on the triumph (itself better attested than the Lupercalia), reconstructing the route that a particular Roman ritual took is in no way an easy task. One would first have to suppose that the route was prescribed and never significantly changed, a supposition that can rarely be inferred with certainty. However, as Beard points out, giving a general picture excludes singular occurrences, but is in many cases still a good way to present a pattern that was considered typical.¹ In Roman religion many myths and rituals were closely tied to specific places so strongly that the connection to a location was preserved even when other elements changed.²

The most important location for the festival is the starting point of the running ritual, the Lupercal cave. This was a sanctuary dedicated to Faunus, and the place where the sacrifice of a he-goat and dog was offered to him before the running started. It is unclear whether these offerings were made inside or outside the cave, but it seems the Lupercal was the place of rituals we know little about. Varro's short note on the *Luperci* (*quod Lupercalibus in Lupercali sacra faciunt*) as well as Plutarch's tantalizing description of the bloodrite are only glimpses into what was probably a more elaborate ceremony.³ Of course, *in Lupercali* need not be taken literally, as 'in

¹ Beard 2007: 91-106.

² A good example of such a ritual is the *ludi Saeculares*, into which Augustus brought substantial changes, but still had them performed at the Tarentum (as in the Republic), while barely retaining any connection to its ancient cult of the dead (see Beard, North, Price 1998: 201-6).

³ Var. *Ling.* 5.85; He repeats this etymology a little further in the same work: *Lupercalia dicta quod in Lupercali Luperci sacra faciunt* (*Ling.* 6.33). Other sources: *ἐκ τοῦ Λυκαίου τεθυκότας* (*Dion. Hal.*

the very cave' but can also denote the general location 'in the area of the Lupercal'/'at the Lupercal'. It is very likely that at least some of the rituals (especially the animal offerings) took place outside, in front of the cave. Nevertheless, if we were able to ascertain the exact location of the Lupercal and submit it to archaeological scrutiny, the research might yield interesting results. Literary sources position the Lupercal at the southwest foot of the Palatine,⁴ but the inability to locate it precisely has contributed to the lack of scholarly attention the cave has received. The Lupercal is the only cave that we know to have been a sanctuary in Republican Roman religion.

In Greek religion, however, caves that served a religious purpose are well attested. In her study of several caves that served as sanctuaries dedicated to the nymphs, Pache notes that in all cases the worshippers would create a whole series of artefacts related to the cult of the nymphs (vases, inscriptions, sculptures, etc.) thus transforming the cave in the process.⁵ Our sources say that a statue of the babes suckling the she-wolf was situated at the Lupercal and an inscription mentions an equestrian statue of Drusus.⁶ Bearing the Greek parallel in mind, we can only speculate on the amount of archaeological evidence we would have at our disposal if the cave sanctuary were to be discovered. We may wonder as to what exactly is implied in the words 'Lupercal...feci' in the *Res Gestae* (a mere restoration or a complete rebuilding), but the fact that Augustus lists the Lupercal with many great temples he 'restored' indicates that this was a well-furnished cult centre.⁷

1.80.1); *et re divina facta eo in loco, qui nunc Lupercal dicitur* (OGR 22.1). Plutarch (*Rom.* 21.4-5): καὶ γὰρ ἀρχομένους τῆς περιδρομῆς τοὺς Λουπέρκους ὁρῶμεν ἐντεῦθεν ὅπου τὸν Ῥωμύλον ἐκτεθῆναι λέγουσι. On the bloodrite, see pp. 62-5, and heading 3.1.4.

⁴ Serv. *Aen.* 8.90: *unde et ficus ruminialis, ad quam eiecti sunt Remus et Romulus. quae fuit ubi nunc est Lupercal in circo*; Verg. (*Aen.* 8.343): *et gelida monstrat sub rupe Lupercal*; Serv. *ad loc.*: *sub monte Palatino est quaedam spelunca*; Vell. Pat. 1.15.3: *Cassius censor, a Lupercali in Palatium versus, theatrum facere instituit*; Liv. (1.5.1): *in Palatio monte Lupercal*; Dion. Hal. 1.79.8: τὸ δὲ ἄντρον, ἐξ οὗ ἡ λιβὰς ἐκδίδεται, τῷ Παλλαντίῳ προσωφοδομημένον δείκνυται κατὰ τὴν ἐπὶ τὸν ἱππόδρομον φέρουσαν ὁδόν; Justin's information (in his epitomes of Pompeius Trogus, 43.1.6) on Evander founding a *templum Lycaeo in huius radicibus* (sc. Palatii) can refer to nothing else but the Lupercal.

⁵ Pache 2010: 37-70.

⁶ Dion. Hal. 1.79.8; Liv. 10.23; *CIL* VI 912.

⁷ *RG.* 4.1-8; 6.31-36. Suetonius seems to imply a renovation: *sacrum Lupercale restituit* (*Aug.* 31.4).

To draw on a parallel closer to Rome, the mithraea that we find scattered throughout the Roman empire were often adapted natural caves or underground chambers built in imitation of the cave where Mithras killed the bull. As literary evidence on the cult of Mithras is scarce and difficult to interpret, scholars have had to rely on archaeological evidence in their study of mithraea.⁸ It is well known that Mithraists used caves for rituals of initiation. However, in our case, the lack of archaeological evidence prevents us inferring from anything other than the literary sources that position the rituals ‘at the Lupercal’. This again calls for comparative parallels to illuminate what the choice of a cave as a sanctuary for the festival could tell us about the Lupercalia. In her groundbreaking study on caves in Greek culture, Ustinova uses neuroscience and cognitive psychology to illuminate the role of caves in religion. A cave is a place of transcendental experience and is perceived as an entrance to the world of the dead and chthonic gods.⁹ We have seen that the purification aspect of the Lupercalia was closely linked to chthonic powers and that Faunus also shared this aspect.¹⁰ As opposed to man-made temples and sanctuaries, a cave is a feature of the natural landscape that creates a sense of mystery and fascination with the divine.

We have seen that the cave Lupercal plays a key role in the Roman foundation myth, which overlaps with the mythology of the festival in the childhood and adolescence of Romulus and Remus.¹¹ *Ficus Ruminalis*, ‘the fig-tree of Romulus’, stood in front of the Lupercal as a permanent spatial reminder of the close connection. If creation myths have their trees of life, the Roman foundation myth has the fig as its sacred tree, a symbol of fertility and new life for the young twins.¹² The

⁸ For an example of such a study see Beck 2000: 145-80.

⁹ Ustinova 2009: 28-32.

¹⁰ Chapter 1.2.

¹¹ Chapter 1.3.

¹² Isidore (*Orig.* 17.7.17) derives *ficus a fecunditate*. Branches of the wild fig tree (‘caprificus’) were used at the Nonae Caprotinae to stimulate fertility (see pp. 26-7).

sources identify this as the place where the she-wolf nursed them.¹³ Consequently, they most frequently derive the name from *rumis/ruma* ('dug').¹⁴ The whole southwestern corner of the Palatine was called Cermalus and derived from *germani*, the twins.¹⁵ In both cases, associations go back to the foundation myth and the udders of the she-wolf that suckled the boys. It is quite possible that this particular tree, which was known as *arbor felix*, was selected to reflect the ancient myth.¹⁶ It does not take a psychoanalyst to recognise that the fruit of the plant has the shape of a female breast and emits a white sap reminiscent of milk.¹⁷

There was also a cult of *diva Rumina*, the goddess of suckling, and apparently shepherds offered her milk instead of wine in a sanctuary next to the fig tree.¹⁸ It is here that Dionysius of Halicarnassus could still recognise 'bronze figures of ancient workmanship'¹⁹ representing the she-wolf with the twins, whether or not this was the same statue that the brothers Ogulnii erected in 296 BC.²⁰ The Palatine surroundings of the Lupercal also included other monuments that pointed to the foundation, such as the famous *casa Romuli*.²¹ In other words, the whole complex was a set of *lieux des*

¹³ Ov. *F.* 2.412; Liv. 1.4.5; Conon *Nar.* 48, Plut. *Rom.* 4.1, *Fort.* 320cf., *OGR* 20.3, Flor. 1.1.2, Plin. *HN.* 15.77, Serv. *Aen.* 8.90, Varr. *Ling.* 5.54, and Fest. 326L s.v. *Romulum*, Fest. 332-3L. It was probably also mentioned by Ennius (see Skutsch *Ann.* 448).

¹⁴ Most of the sources that mention the fig derive it from *ruma/rumis*. It was also derived from *ruminare* (chew over, ruminate), *ruma* ('a part of the throat'), and *Rumon* as a name of the Tiber (Serv. *Aen.* 8.90). For other references see Maltby 1991: s.v. 'Ruminalis ficus'.

¹⁵ Var. *Ling.* 5.54, Plut. *Rom.* 3.6; Fabius Pictor F4b (*FRHist* 2.64-5). For a discussion of the sources see Coarelli (2012: 127-32) who concludes that Cermalus primarily denotes the lower southwestern corner of the Palatine, and thus in almost all the attested instances implies a connection to the Lupercal.

¹⁶ On *arbor felix* see Macr. *Sat.* 3.20.2-3.

¹⁷ Ogilvie 1965: *ad Liv.* 1.4.5. The fig was also later associated with female pudenda (Adams 1982: 113).

¹⁸ Var. *R.* 2.11.5 and *apud* Nonium Marcellum s.v. 'Rumam'; Aug. *C. D.* 4.11, 21, 34; 6.10, 7.11 and Plut. *Rom.* 4, *Quaes. Rom.* 57. Mazzoni (2010: 92-6) argues this was the older cult that the Roman foundation narrative displaced. However, one may also suppose the cult was a product of the foundation narrative.

¹⁹ Dion. Hal. 1.79.8.

²⁰ Liv. 10.23. The most likely intention was to commemorate an old tradition about the place and not to celebrate a plebeian victory, as Wiseman would have it (1995b: 72-6). The identification with the Ogulnii monument is complicated by the existence of another *ficus Ruminalis* in the Forum (see p. 120 below) and several other she-wolf statues in Rome (see Oakley 2005: 264-6; *LTUR* 5.290-1). The same problem faces the identification with the famous 'lupa Capitolina' (in *Museo dei Conservatori*), even as its dating is still being debated (see e.g. Bartoloni 2010).

²¹ See *LTUR*, s.v.

mémoire, replete with the mythology of the foundation, essential in the formation of Roman historical consciousness.²²

Dionysius is also our main source for the positioning of the Lupercal itself. He tells us that ‘the area around the sacred precinct has been united with the city’ and that ‘the cave from which the spring flows is still pointed out, built up against the side of the Palatine hill on the road which leads to the Circus’.²³ We should connect this with the information provided by Velleius Paterculus on the construction of a theatre in front of the temple of Magna Mater in 153 BC.²⁴ The theatre was placed *a Lupercali in Palatium versus* (‘from the Lupercal facing the Palatine’), implying that the Lupercal itself was situated below the theatre, which must have been sizeable enough to house the plays of the Megalensia.²⁵ Velleius’ description concurs with Dionysius’ placing of the Augustan Lupercal ‘on the road which leads to the Circus’ for this is almost certainly *vicus Tuscus*,²⁶ especially when we consider other passing references that place the Lupercal *sub gelida rupe, sub monte Palatino, in radicibus Palatii* and finally *in Circo*.²⁷ Considering all the literary evidence, I must agree with Coarelli’s conclusion that the Lupercal was situated on the southwestern slope of the Palatine, somewhere in the triangle formed by the *Scalae Caci* in the east, *Velabrum* in the west, and temple of Magna Mater in the north (see map, fig. 3).²⁸ The question remains as to the south limit of the area. Allowing enough space for the theatre under the temple of Cybele and considering the fact that our sources position the Lupercal under the Palatine as well as ‘in Circo’, we may conclude that the Lupercal should be in the southern portion of the delimited triangle, not far from the Circus.

²² Rodriguez-Mayorgas 2010: 100, Coarelli 2012: 127-89.

²³ 1.32.4; 1.79.8.

²⁴ Discussion in Coarelli 2012: 276-82.

²⁵ The *ludi Megalenses*, or the games of Magna Mater were an important celebration in Roman religious and social life. The plays of Terence and Plautus were performed at the games, and Cicero also positioned them *ante templum, in ipso Matris Magnae conspectu* (*Har.* 24).

²⁶ Presenting an etymology for Velabrum, Plutarch (*Rom.* 5.5) uses almost the same periphrasis for *Vicus Tuscus*: ...τὴν εἰς τὸν ἱππόδρομον φέρουσιν ἐξ ἀγορᾶς πάροδον. Compare with Dionysius’ description at 1.79.8 and Dionysius again at 5.36.4. See Coarelli 2012: 84-7.

²⁷ See n. 4 above.

²⁸ Coarelli 2012: 132-9.

The figure originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. The map was sourced at Coarelli 2012: 137

figure 3: Carandini's and Coarelli's positioning of the Lupercal (from Coarelli 2012: 137)

This brings us to an interesting proposal of Gori and Parker who, in their joint essay of 1869 suggested that the Lupercal was the cave they found near the church of Santa Anastasia at the corner of the 'Via de' Cerchi and the Via de' Fienili' (presently via di S. Teodoro).²⁹ They describe 'a subterranean cave-reservoir, partly natural and partly built' with a spring of running water that pours into a channel (which takes it down to the arch of Janus and the Cloaca Maxima). It was divided into two portions

²⁹ First report by Gori 1867: 104-8. A second (English) version came out in Gori and Parker 1869: 2-9, which contradicts the first at some minor points. The latter was reprinted in J.H. Parker 1878: 177-85, with a map (see below). Curiously, the beginning of the reports places the cave 'at the north-west corner of the Palatine Hill', but the map and the rest of his description make it clear that the SW corner was meant.

of considerable length.³⁰ They saw remains of stucco still attached to the vault as well as brickwork and a niche with *opus reticulatum*.³¹ The location of the cave at the foot of the Palatine (so near the Circus) makes it a potential candidate for the ancient Lupercal. The presence of running water should not be ignored as we saw the only substantial description of the cave in antiquity (by Dionysius) explicitly involves a spring. Nevertheless, Gori-Parker's proposal has been ignored in the subsequent scholarship. The cave was apparently used for a mill, and Gori accessed it through a well descending four metres underground.³² The area has considerably changed in the modern period and the Via dei Cerchi is now constantly open to traffic, which makes direct investigation impossible. Nevertheless, if modern archaeological research were conducted in this spot and the general area, it might yield interesting results.

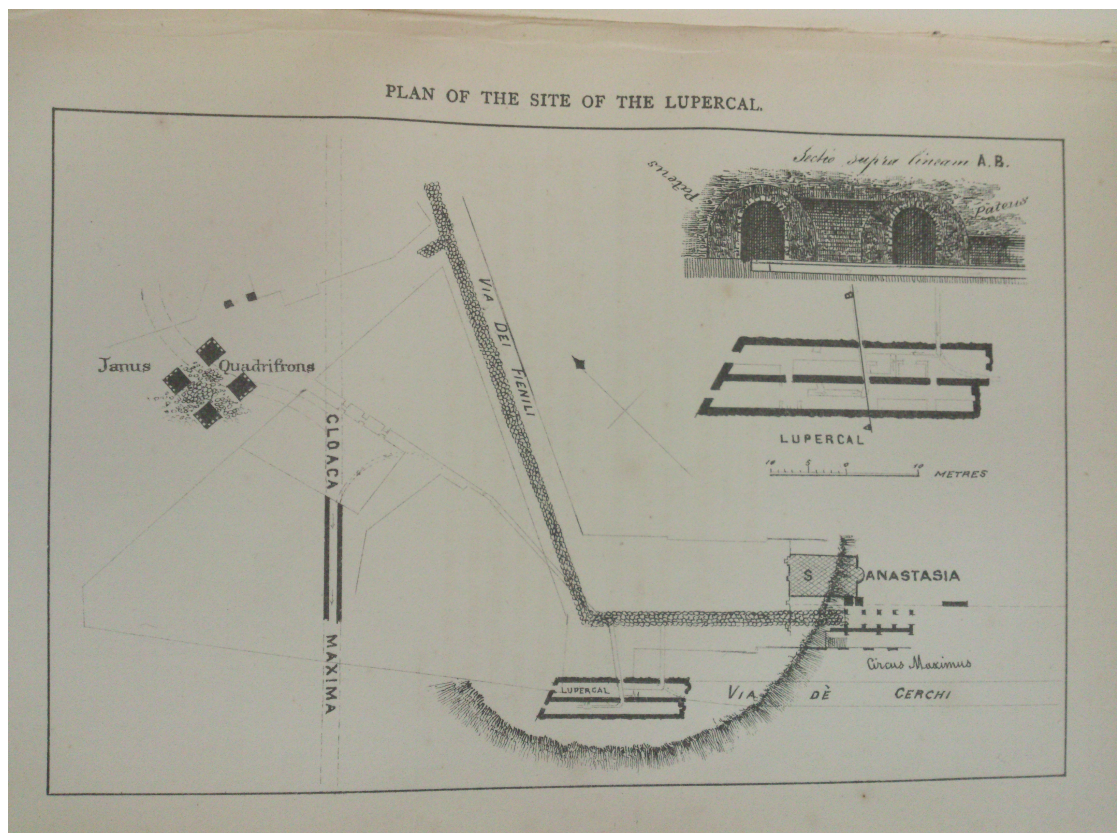


figure 4: Map used in Parker (1878: plate 44) indicating the location of the cave

³⁰ 'The cave is divided into two portions, one thirty-seven yards long and the other thirty-six, each rather more than two yards wide' (1869: 7).

³¹ Gori and Parker 1869: 7.

³² Gori's description: 'scendendo da un'altezza di circa 19 palmi' (1867: 106). A Roman palm is 21.1cm, which makes 19 palms an equivalent of four metres length.

On the other hand, archaeological research was conducted to the northeast of this area in the complex of the house of Augustus. In 2007, Iacopi and Telone of the ‘Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma’ reported on a fascinating find of a circular rotunda 8m high and 7.5m in diameter. Probes were sent 16m underground and took pictures of the grotto that revealed a richly decorated ceiling with coloured mosaics and seashells, and a representation of an eagle at the top of the dome. This immediately caused a great flurry in the media as Carandini identified the newly discovered grotto as the Lupercal.³³ He was criticised by many of his Italian colleagues who were much more cautious in their conclusions. Carandini then published *La Casa di Augusto* (a book co-authored with his student Daniela Bruno), where he struggled to prove the identification.³⁴

First, he took Dionysius’ street that leads to the Circus to be not the *vicus Tuscus*, but ‘strada parallela a quella immediatamente esterna al Circo, dove passava il limite fra le regioni X e XI’.³⁵ The street is not mentioned by any ancient source, but its archaeological remains were found lining the southern edge of the church of Santa Anastasia.³⁶ Thus, this would still be closer to the above-delimited triangle (than it is to Carandini’s grotto), if one wants to accept this reading of Dionysius. Furthermore, according to Carandini himself, the grotto is at least 66 metres away from the location where we should expect the Lupercal considering Velleius’ information on the theatre of Longinus.³⁷ Servius’ note on the Lupercal as positioned ‘in Circo’ should be translated as ‘at the Circus’ (implying proximity rather than an exact location), but then Gori-Parker’s cave is much closer to the Circus than Carandini’s grotto.

³³ The news was extensively covered in Italy and sent ripples across the international media. As Coarelli pointed out, it was not in fact very new as the grotto was known in the 16th century and R. Lanciani and C. Hülsen had a similar debate about it at the end of the 19th century. See Coarelli 2008 and Coarelli 2012: 132-3.

³⁴ Carandini 2008: 8-12.

³⁵ Carandini 2008: 11.

³⁶ See Whitehead 1927: 405-10.

³⁷ And this is the most northern point in the triangle where one would expect the Lupercal. Thus, Coarelli (2008) was right to point out that the distance from the southern point of the triangle (which is a more probable location for the Lupercal) is at least 80-100m.

Additionally, as Zevi and la Regina pointed out immediately after the news came out, what the pictures show is typical of a *nymphaeum*: a *rotunda* decorated with sea shells and coloured mosaic.³⁸ Carandini then goes into a long discussion of the representations of Lupercal in Roman art, but none of these in fact show the interior of the cave and the artistic depiction of the she-wolf motif at a particular point in the pictures can hardly be taken as evidence for the topographical location of the Lupercal.³⁹ However, we saw that the Cermalus is a topographical entity, and the foundation myth insists on positioning the cave right next to the area flooded by the Tiber. Although the ground level of this area has been considerably elevated since antiquity, Carandini's location for the Lupercal is still too far up the slope of the Palatine for it to be reached by the Tiber floods.⁴⁰ Thus, we may conclude that this grotto is by itself a fascinating rediscovery, but is not the Lupercal.

The lower part of the Cermalus is the location of not only the Lupercal, but of the *figus Ruminalis*. It is less known that this fig tree had a counterpart in the Forum. Faunus, the god of the Lupercal, had many epithets, one of which was 'Ficarius'.⁴¹ His divine counterpart Silvanus had a statue in front of the temple of Saturn, where another fig tree stood until it endangered the statue with its expanding roots. According to Pliny, the Vestals then transplanted it to the Comitium, 'in medio foro'.⁴² Tacitus reports that its branches began to wither in AD 58, which was considered ominous.⁴³ The presence of a fig tree in the Forum, originally in front of the statue of Silvanus, was meant to reflect the fig tree at the Lupercal (as the

³⁸ La Regina in a *Reuters* article by Aloisi (24/11/07) and Zevi in *La Repubblica* (23/11/07).

³⁹ Carandini 2008: 12-8. For other problems with the book see the review by Wiseman 2009: 527-45. For the representations of the Lupercal scene in Roman art see now Albertson 2012.

⁴⁰ The ground level of the southwest Palatine has considerably changed from the late Republic to the early empire. The late Republican level is now represented by the gravel, to be found below 12 metres above sea level, and this was already under ground by the time of Augustus (De Angelis d'Ossat 1956: 74-7). The rise came about through Tiber flooding that brought sediment into the Velabrum valley (see Ammerman 1998: 213-23).

⁴¹ Hieron. *ad Isaiam* 13.21; Isid. *Orig.* 8.2.104; Pelagonius *Ars veterinaria* 31.

⁴² Plin. *HN.* 15.77; by the agency of the Vestals, rather than by a miracle of Attus Navius the augur, who later became associated with the fig tree most likely because his statue stood next to it in front of the senate house. See Liv. 1.36.5; Dion. Hal. 3.71.5; Ogilvie 1965: 49.

⁴³ Tac. *Ann.* 13.58.

sanctuary of Faunus); it thus connected two places which the Luperci visited as they ran.⁴⁴ For the presence of these priests at the Lupercal and the Forum is indisputable.

However, how did they get from one place to the other? For a long time modern scholars maintained that the Luperci made a circuit around the Palatine, basing this on a passage of Varro:⁴⁵

Dehinc quintus Quintilis et sic deinceps usque ad Decembrem a numero. ad hos qui additi, prior a principe deo Ianuarius appellatus; posterior, ut idem dicunt scriptores, ab diis inferis Februarius appellatus, quod tum his paren<te>tur; ego magis arbitror Februarium a die februatō, quod tum februatōr populus, id est lupercis nudis lustratur antiquum oppidum Palatinum gregibus humanis cinctum.

Therefore the fifth month is called Quintilis and so all the others up to December by their respective number. As to the months which were added to these, the first was called Ianuarius from the first god. The following one, as the writers say in the same way, Februarius from the gods of the underworld, as they are then placated. I am more of the opinion that February received its name from the februated day, for the people is februated on that day, i.e. the naked Luperci lustrate the ancient city of Palatine, encircled by groups of people.

For almost a century, this passage was taken as prime evidence that the Luperci circled the Palatine. In 1863, Preller understood the phrase *gregibus humanis* as referring to the Luperci and *cinctum* as signifying their circular course around the Palatine. Jordan adopted Preller's identification of the Luperci as *greges humani*, and was followed by Manquardt and Wissowa, whose great authority helped facilitate the general acceptance of the theory.⁴⁶ Michels challenged this view in 1953, and, relying on Mommsen, pointed out that the sentence would be circular if *gregibus humanis* referred back to the Luperci. It is indeed difficult to imagine Varro saying that 'the Luperci lustrate the Palatine which is encircled by the Luperci'. We saw earlier that Varro is not free from providing circular definitions in his etymologies, but even if he wanted to refer back to the Luperci, why use a phrase such as *greges humani*? Michels' offers an imaginative explanation: the phrase was used to signify the Luperci

⁴⁴ It does not thereby follow that the two trees designated the beginning and the end of the course, as Wiseman would have it (1995a: 7-8, followed by North 2008: 156).

⁴⁵ *Ling.* 6.34.

⁴⁶ Discussion and references in Michels 1953: 36-40.

in their capacity as the souls of the dead.⁴⁷ As much as one would like to see in Varro the conclusion we arrive at using modern comparative research, this particular phrase cannot be twisted to yield that sense.

What Varro is referring back to in *gregibus humanis cinctum* is the *populus*. The Luperci lustrate the Palatine and the people, groups of whom surround the hill in expectation of the running ritual. The word *grex* in Latin can signify both human and animal groups just like its cognate *gana* in Sanskrit.⁴⁸ There is nothing to say that the word *grex* implies animal groups (flocks).⁴⁹ The word *cingere* has static connotations, as Michels herself elaborated.⁵⁰ Its primary meaning is ‘gird, surround’ and here it refers not to the running Luperci, but to the people standing in their way in expectation of the blows.⁵¹ When Ovid says that the Luperci lustrate crowded streets (*celebres vias*),⁵² he is also referring to the multitude of people around the Palatine.

Debates on the course of the Luperci have developed from the fact that the only three places that the sources explicitly state they visited are the Lupercal, the Forum and the Sacra Via. Thus, Michels postulated a course for the Luperci which has them start at the Lupercal, run to the Sacra Via and end at the Forum.⁵³ Her view was accepted by several scholars (with more or less modification),⁵⁴ as well as her interpretation of a passage of Augustine, which editors include among the fragments

⁴⁷ Michels 1953: 49.

⁴⁸ See Ernout-Meillet 1979: s.v.

⁴⁹ Although Varro might have (consciously or not) chosen the ambiguous word *grex* to denote ‘groups of men’ (rather than some other phrase) in the context of the Palatine because earlier on in the same work he derives Palatine from *balare* (‘to bleat’) (*Ling.* 5.53).

⁵⁰ Michels 1953: 58.

⁵¹ The verb is usually used in cases when something is completely surrounded by something else, e.g. *insulae fluctibus cinctae, muris oppida, urbem obsidione, zona aliquem cingere* (*TLL*, s.v.). Flobert (1983: 95) argues that ‘cingere’ implies the crowd cleared a space for the running Luperci, and thus encircled them on both sides. This seems to unnecessarily project a modern marathon race on the interactive ritual.

⁵² *semicaper, coleris cinctutis, Faune, Lupercis/ cum lustrant celebres verbera secta vias* (*F.* 501-2).

⁵³ Michels is not completely clear about the specifics, but it seems she would have them run through the Velabrum up to the Sacra Via and then turn back towards the Forum (1953: 44-6).

⁵⁴ Ulf 1982: 63-66. Wiseman (1995a: 7) also accepts it with an element of liberal interpretation: ‘...the Luperci evidently spent much of the day running about performing their antics.’ See also Ziolkowski (below, p. 128). I am told there is also an option that the two Luperci groups ran in opposite directions around the hill and met half-way.

of Varro. In fact, this reconstruction of Varro is far from certain.⁵⁵ Let us have a closer look at what Augustine really said:⁵⁶

Per haec tempora, id est ab exitu Israel ex Aegypto usque ad mortem Iesu Nave, per quem populus idem terram promissionis accepit, sacra sunt instituta diis falsis a regibus Graeciae, quae memoriam diluvii et ab eo liberationis hominum vitaeque tunc aerumnosae modo ad alta, modo ad plana migrantium sollemni celebritate revocarunt. Nam et Lupercorum per sacram viam ascensum atque descensum sic interpretantur, ut ab eis significari dicant homines qui propter aquae inundationem summa montium petiverunt et rursus eadem residente ad ima redierunt.

Through these times, that is from the exodus of Israel from Egypt to the death of Joshua, son of Nun, through whom that people gained the promised land, the Greek kings instituted rites to false gods, which by a regular celebration invoked the memory of the flood and of men's liberation from it and of the harsh existence that the people then suffered as they had to move between plains and hills. For they interpret this way the ascent and the descent of the Luperci along the Sacra Via, and say that they signify the men who sought the hilltops because of the inundation of water and then returned to the lowlands when it retreated.

Augustine here continues his discussion of the book of *Exodus* from the previous passage, and it is from this Judaeo-Christian perspective that he interprets the Lupercalia. It is not at all clear who 'they' in the second sentence are (in *interpretantur, dicant*), and I do not see why this should be Varro's interpretation. Granted, flood myths seem to be universal,⁵⁷ and they were certainly current in the Hellenistic world. Pausanias transmits a similar story about one of the ancient names of Delphi, Likoreia. In times of Deucalion's flood, the inhabitants followed the howling of wolves to the top of the mountain and reached safety where they founded a city named after the animals. Riposati argues that Varro might have used such a Hellenistic flood story to relate the Lupercalia to Greek mythology.⁵⁸

However, Augustine's report is much better understood in the context of his own work. Augustine refers to the Hebrew myth of the world flood, as a part of the Biblical history he presents in book 18 of the *City of God*. True, in a previous passage he cites Varro as referring to Deucalion and Pyrrha, but admits that this flood was

⁵⁵ Fraccaro, fr. 21. Wiseman 1995a: 7-8.

⁵⁶ *C. D.* 18.12.

⁵⁷ See Witzel 2010: 225-42.

⁵⁸ Riposati 1978: 64-5.

limited to some parts of the world (chiefly Greece), and not universal like the Hebrew one.⁵⁹ He also specifies that neither Greek nor Roman history knows of a universal flood.⁶⁰ The whole of book 18 is marked by Augustine's efforts to connect two separate strains of narrative, the Biblical and Greco-Roman.⁶¹ In this process, the ancient festival of the Lupercalia becomes entangled with the oldest strain of Hebrew myth in *Genesis*. This mechanism is well documented in late Antiquity: Biblical authority takes precedence over 'pagan' myths, which consequently become interpreted in a Judaeo-Christian framework.⁶² We may conclude that the 'they' in Augustine's sentence are more likely to be Christian historians or simply his friends in Rome rather than Varro.

Augustine's information on the Luperci ascending and descending the Sacra Via does not contradict the crowds encircling the Palatine.⁶³ There is no doubt, even for Michels, that the Luperci started from the Lupercal, which is at the southwest foot of the Palatine. The Sacra Via runs north of the hill and its western end goes through the Forum up to the Arx on the Capitol. Now, the exact extent of the Sacra Via changed through time, but it always stretched along the northern end of the Palatine from where it sloped down towards the Forum (see map, fig. 5). In the debate on its extent, two sources are used in the attempt to delineate the street. One is Varro again:⁶⁴

Carinae pote a caerimonia quod hinc oritur caput sacrae viae ab Streniae sacello quae pertinet in arce<m>, qua sacra quotquot mensibus feruntur in arcem et per quam augures ex arce profecti solent inaugurare. huius sacrae viae pars haec sola volgo nota, quae est a foro eunti primore clivo.

'Carinae' is derived rather from 'caerimonia' because from here at the shrine of Strenia starts the head of the Sacra Via which stretches to the Arx. By this

⁵⁹ *His temporibus, ut Varro scribit, regnante Atheniensibus Cranao, successore Cecropis, ut autem nostri Eusebius et Hieronymus, adhuc eodem Cecrope permanente, diluvium fuit, quod appellatum est Deucalionis, eo quod ipse regnabat in earum terrarum partibus, ubi maxime factum est. Hoc autem diluvium nequaquam ad Aegyptum atque ad eius vicina pervenit (C. D. 18.10).*

⁶⁰ *C. D. 18.8.*

⁶¹ The former he calls *civitas Dei* and the latter *civitas saeculi huius* (18.1).

⁶² See now Busine 2014: 220-36.

⁶³ As both Preller and Jordan understood, though Michels acknowledged the option only to reject it (1953: 45 fn. 17).

⁶⁴ *Ling. 5.45.*

street the offerings are brought to the Arx in each month, and along it the augurs go when they start out from the Arx to perform the auguries. Of this Sacra Via only this one part is known as such among the people, which is on the first ascent when you go from the Forum.

Varro gives the full extent of the Via Sacra, pointing out that it was also popularly known in a more narrow sense. His vague expression *primore clivo* caused the modern debate about what exactly is meant. Festus is more precise:⁶⁵

Sacram viam quidam appellatam esse existimant, quod in ea foedus ictum sit inter Romulum ac Tatium; quidam, quod eo itinere utantur sacerdotes idulium sacrorum conficiendorum causa. Itaque ne eatenus quidem, ut vulgus opinatur, sacra appellanda est a regia ad domum Regis sacrificuli, sed etiam a Regis domo ad sacellum Streniae, et rursus a regia usque in arcem.

Some think the Sacra Via was so called because in it an alliance was struck between Romulus and Tatius: some, because the priests use that route to perform the rites of the Ides. Therefore, it is to be called the Sacra Via, not only to this extent, from the Regia to the house of the Rex sacrificulus, as the people think, but also from the home of the Rex to the shrine of Strenia, and back from the Regia all the way to the Arx.

The figure originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. The map was sourced at Ziolkowski 2004

fig. 5 (from Ziolkowski 2004). The red line represents the course of the Sacra Via now agreed on by both Ziolkowski and Coarelli.

⁶⁵ Fest. 372L.

Despite Festus' clarity, archaeological debates have continued since it is difficult to determine the precise location of the *domus Regis sacrificuli*.⁶⁶ Coarelli closely follows the two ancient accounts by arguing that there were two concurrent concepts of the Sacra Via in antiquity: one running from the Arx to the *sacellum Streniae* in the Carinae (see fig. 5), and the other a more common 'short' version which defined it more loosely as running from the Regia in the Forum to the *summa sacra via* (the top of Sacra Via), the highest point of the street as it goes up the northern side of the Palatine.⁶⁷ The former, longer version would be the antiquarian definition (known to the savants) and the latter a view held by the common people. Ziolkowski has demonstrated that the longer version was not restricted only to antiquarians, but was understood by other ancient sources and attested on inscriptions.⁶⁸ However, both Coarelli and Ziolkowski have now agreed that the Sacra Via did have two concurrent concepts in antiquity.⁶⁹ It is not at all unusual for a particular toponym to be known in the more popular, narrow sense while a higher authority retains its original, wider definition.⁷⁰

When we connect Augustine's information with that presented by Festus and Varro, it becomes clear that the ascent and descent to which he is referring are a result of the natural geographical properties of the Sacra Via. The Sacra Via is popularly defined by the high point which it reaches rising from the Regia on the edge of the Forum along the northern slope of the Palatine. In that sense, much of Sacra Via was considered a part of the Palatine, as in Latin any position from the base of

⁶⁶ See Carandini 2004: 58-60.

⁶⁷ Coarelli 1983: 11-79; with a summary in Coarelli, *LTUR*, s.v.

⁶⁸ Ziolkowski 2004: 111-9.

⁶⁹ Otherwise, Coarelli amended his views on the Sacra Via in his recent book (2012: 29-35), in great part accepting Ziolkowski's (2004) conclusions.

⁷⁰ Broadway in New York is a good example from the modern world. Broadway Street in fact runs from Manhattan to the village of Sleepy Hollow in New York State. It thus stretches over 50 km, although Broadway is generally known only as the portion of the street that runs through Manhattan, where the famous Theatre District is located.

the hill to its top was considered to be *in Palatio*.⁷¹ How did the Luperci reach the street? Varro's note on lustration of the *antiquum oppidum Palatinum* has rightly been connected to Tacitus' note⁷² on the early *pomerium* of Rome, which was later extended. The original *pomerium* encircled the Palatine just like the Luperci, marking the sacred space of the city on the hill. According to Tacitus, it went around the base of the Palatine, defined by the Ara Maxima and the altar of Consus in the south, and by the shrine of the Lares, Curiae Veteres, and the area of the future Forum in the north.⁷³ The shrine of the Lares was *in summa sacra via*,⁷⁴ at the highest part of the street on the Velia, which brings us back to Augustine.

Theoretically, the Luperci could reach this point either from the western or eastern side of the Palatine. Michels preferred the former option, in which case they would have to ascend the slope of the Sacra Via going from the Forum. She discarded Plutarch's use of the noun περιδρομή as not necessarily implying a circular course but 'right-about-face', and similarly Dionysius' use of περιέρχομαι she took in its rarer sense of 'move about the city' rather than around it. She concluded the discussion with the claim that 'a town may be purified by a ceremony performed in front of it as well as by a procession around it'.⁷⁵ As a general statement, this might well be true, but in the case of Roman lustrations, it is simply not the case. Lustration is a technical term for a ritual that involves circular motion.⁷⁶ Even if circular motion were not clearly signified by Varro's use of *lustrare* (a point to which we return below), it is additionally explained by *gregibus humanis cinctum*, a phrase that implies the people

⁷¹ The same applies to the Lupercal, see above pp. 112-13. For examples see Heyworth 2011: 62-4 despite Ziolkowski 2004: 131-9.

⁷² First by Jordan 1871: 269.

⁷³ Tac. *Ann.* 12.24; Gell. 13.14.2.

⁷⁴ The exact location has not been archaeologically confirmed (see Haselberger s.v.), but literary evidence places it *in summa sacra via* (*RG* 19, Solinus 1.23).

⁷⁵ Michels 1953: 46.

⁷⁶ Elaboration in the following chapter (2.2).

girt the entire hill in expectation of the running Luperci. It is in line with this idea that Plutarch uses περιδρομή to describe the motion of the Luperci.⁷⁷

Ziolkowski rightly warned that Dionysius' testimony is not very useful in reconstructing the course because he is imagining a Lupercalia celebration as it would appear in the primeval time of Evander's settlement, that is to say before a city was founded on the Palatine.⁷⁸ If we add the fact that this was tied to his ideological purpose of portraying Romans as originally Greek, no great conclusions should be drawn from his positioning of Evander's village on the Palatine, as Michels attempted in her detailed analysis.⁷⁹ However, Ziolkowski contradicts the ancient evidence by saying that the Luperci had no fixed route, but simply ran about 'everywhere people were gathered'.⁸⁰ He adds that their visiting the Forum and the Sacra Via was a later development and a natural consequence of this area becoming the centre of political life (where most crowds would normally gather).

In fact, the ancient evidence points to quite the opposite conclusion. Tacitus' careful delineation of the ancient *pomerium* and Varro's note on the lustration thereof, as well as Augustine's observation of the Luperci on the Sacra Via all in fact point to a great consistency in the route through the ages. As a lustration of the early Palatine city, the Lupercalia involved a circular motion around the hill and this trait was preserved in the ritual at least up to the time when Plutarch is writing his report. Augustine does not mention a circular motion because he is more concerned with his Christian interpretation, but he still places the Luperci on the Sacra Via, an area that they must have passed since the beginnings of the rite to perform the lustration of the Palatine, even before Sacra Via itself became a city street.

⁷⁷ καὶ γὰρ ἀρχομένους τῆς περιδρομῆς τοὺς Λουπέρκους ὁρῶμεν ἐντεῦθεν ὅπου τὸν Ῥωμύλον ἔκτεθῆναι λέγουσι (*Rom.* 21.4-5).

⁷⁸ Ziolkowski 1998: 201. Nevertheless, Ziolkowski later uses Dionysius to reinforce his own conclusion that there was no prescribed course in the ritual (205-6).

⁷⁹ Michels 1953: 41-4. Discussion of Dionysius on pp. 76-80.

⁸⁰ Ziolkowski 1998: 205.

It is true, however, that Augustine's placing of the Luperci at this point presents a problem Coarelli did not see because he (and many others) took it for granted that Augustine is citing Varro.⁸¹ In imperial times, the whole of *summa sacra via* was built over first by the vestibule of Nero's *domus aurea*, and then the temple of Venus and Rome (see map, fig. 5).⁸² Consequently, a considerable section of the Sacra Via disappeared, starting from the arch of Titus to the Compitum Acilii.⁸³ Seemingly, that leaves the Luperci only with the descent of the remaining Sacra Via if they are coming from the Curiae Veteres (in the east, see map, fig. 6) on their circular course. However, there are several possibilities here that do not necessitate positing a semicircular course as Michels and here followers did.

Firstly, it should be pointed out that there is no evidence whatsoever that Augustine ever in fact saw the Luperci running. His only stay in Rome came between the summer of AD 383 and autumn of AD 384 (when he was already in Milan), which would leave him with only one celebration of the Lupercalia to see, in February 384.⁸⁴ We do not know whether he used the possibility or not, but he certainly never claims that he did. In the above passage Augustine is twice referring to another source (*interpretantur, dicant*), not his own observation of events.⁸⁵ This Christian aetiology of the Lupercalia was created in the fourth century when this growing religion was looking for ways to explain old 'pagan' rituals within its own framework. The persistence of these rituals caused a great unease in many Christians, a process that

⁸¹ In his two discussions on the course (Coarelli 2005: 29-42 and 2012: 139-45).

⁸² See Ziolkowski 2004: 119-30 and Coarelli 2012: 29-35.

⁸³ The new situation made the area just north of the arch of Titus the beginning of the now shortened Sacra Via. This is suggested by Plutarch (*Cic.* 16.3): προελθὼν δ' ὁ Κικέρων ἐκάλει τὴν σύγκλητον εἰς τὸ τοῦ Σησίου Διὸς ἱερόν, ὃν Στάτορα Ῥωμαῖοι καλοῦσιν, ἰδρυμένον ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς ἱερᾶς ὁδοῦ πρὸς τὸ Παλάτιον ἀνιόντων and; Galen (*de methodo medendi* 10. 942): ...κατὰ τὴν ἱερὰν ὁδὸν, ἥτις ἐκ τοῦ τῆς Ῥώμης ἱεροῦ κατὰγει πρὸς τὰς ἀγορὰς.

⁸⁴ Augustine's contemporaries attest that the Lupercalia was performed at this time, including Servius (*Aen.* 8.90) and St. Jerome: *Ilico ego, velut postliminio, Ierosolymam sum reversus: et post Romuli casam et ludorum Lupercalia, diversorium Mariae et Salvatoris speluncam aspexi* (*Interpretatio Libri Didymi Alexandrini de Spiritu Sancto* 105); a passage which Carandini (2008: 105-19) stretches to argue that the two myths influenced each other. However, the apparent similarity between the representations of the two myths has much more to do with the fact that they are both foundation myths rather than their secondary interplay.

⁸⁵ Ziolkowski's claim is unfounded: 'I am sure it was his own reminiscence' (1998: 206).

will culminate soon after Augustine's visit to Rome with the decrees of Theodosius I, and will still trouble pope Gelasius more than a century later.⁸⁶ It is in this context that we find Augustine's citation of a source (written or oral?) that sought (like Augustine himself) to give a Christian meaning to an ancient ritual of the Lupercalia.

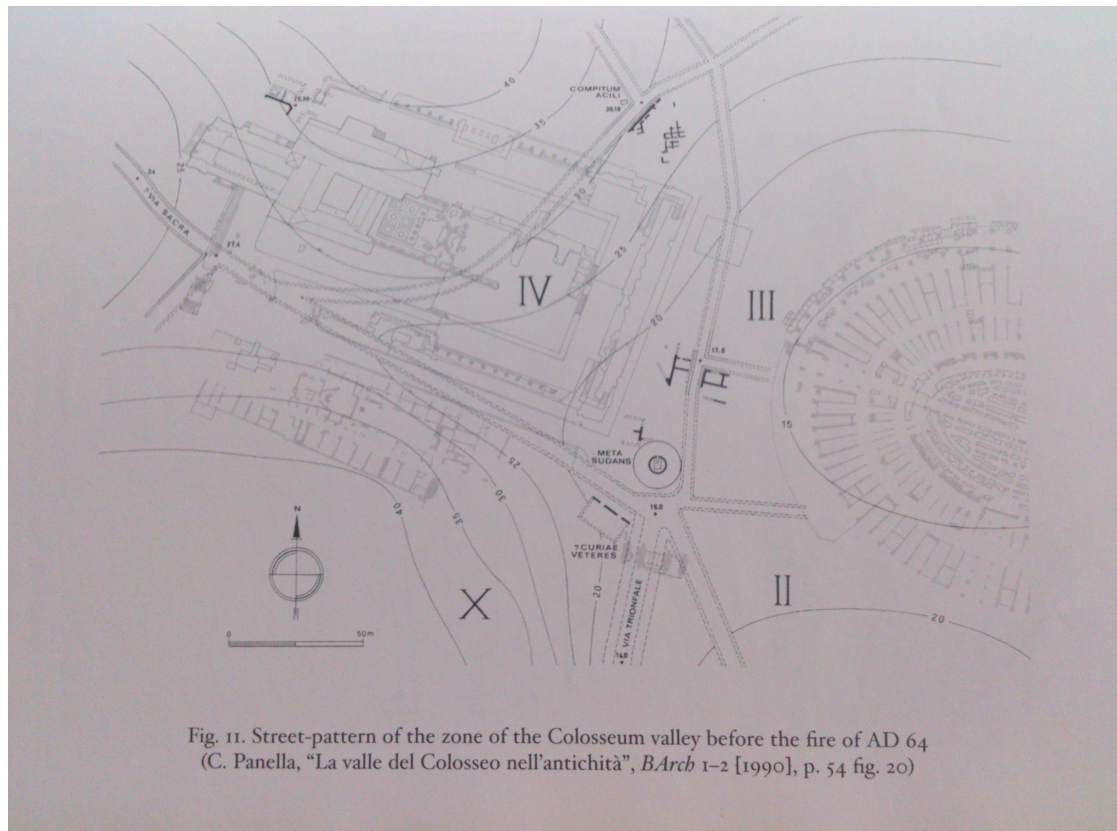


Fig. 11. Street-pattern of the zone of the Colosseum valley before the fire of AD 64 (C. Panella, "La valle del Colosseo nell'antichità", *BArch* 1-2 [1990], p. 54 fig. 20)

figure 6: map of the northeast corner of the Palatine (from Panella 1996)

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Thus, the ascent and descent in Augustine's description are of questionable value because they come from a secondary source and because they are a result of an attempt to fit the ritual into a preconceived Christian perspective. In this context, we should consider another possibility: Augustine was trying to make a Christian point ('even pagan rituals attest our beliefs') and he might not be aiming for the kind of precision of expression we would expect. Roman streets did not have signs as our streets do and it is quite possible that Augustine (or his source) would casually

⁸⁶ For a series of discussions on the relationship between pagans and Christians in late Antiquity see Brown and Lizzi Testa 2008. On Gelasius see chapter 2.3.

describe the climb from the Curiae Veteres to the arch of Titus (see fig. 6) as an ascent of the Sacra Via, although this was technically not a part of that street. This alternative understanding is not an option one can easily dismiss, for we have seen above that Festus and Varro speak of two concurrent concepts of the Sacra Via in an earlier period.

However, even if we were to ignore these problems for the moment, and accept the note on ‘ascent and descent’ for granted, this still presents no good evidence for positing a semicircular course for the Luperci in the time of Augustine (let alone Varro). If the Luperci did in fact ascend and descend the Sacra Via, this was most likely a consequence of this area being the centre of the celebration (as we saw in the chapter on Caesar), so the priests would have to spend a long time on the street and the Forum, going back and forth between the people desiring their blows. A ritual that involves running and playful striking can barely be a completely ordered event. It was more like a playful game than a solemn procession. However, this does not mean that it was completely devoid of rules, or that the course varied greatly from time to time. Granted, it is not impossible to imagine that the lustration aspect of the Lupercalia was forgotten at some point and that the changes of late Antiquity also introduced a different course for the Luperci, but then one would need more to deduce such far-reaching conclusions than this ambiguous passage of Augustine.

Thus, although Ziolkowski’s cautionary note on the Lupercalia ‘obviously’ undergoing changes through time does have a general value, there is nothing to indicate that the particular course of the Luperci significantly changed.⁸⁷ No matter how strange this might seem to some modern scholars, it is fully in line with the conservative nature of Roman public ritual. Otherwise, how does one explain that Varro’s note at the end of the Republic still reflects the lustration of the Palatine

⁸⁷ ‘It is obvious, however, that the significance of a festival as long-lasting as the Lupercalia underwent profound changes over time.’ (Ziolkowski 1998: 204).

pomerium as it was set at the time of the kings? Naturally, various aspects of the Lupercalia did undergo changes through the centuries of the empire, but when it comes to the course of the ritual Augustine's information need not be in contradiction to the Republican sources.⁸⁸ In fact, a note in the fifth-century calendar of Silvius Polemius still explains the month of February as *dictus a febro verbo, quod purgamentum veteres nominabant quia tum Romae moenia lustrabantur*.⁸⁹ This is still in tune with Varro and might even be directly or indirectly derived from him. The walls of the city of Rome in the fifth century went far from the ancient *pomerium*, so Polemius can only be referring to the walls of the city in the much older sense (the walls around the Palatine) while the festival implied in *febro* can only be the Lupercalia.⁹⁰ Can we then reconstruct a route for the Luperci that would at least be a typical model, if not a fixed course they strictly adhered to through the long centuries of the ritual's performance?

In the most perceptive of the discussions on the issue, Coarelli also recognised Varro as the most authoritative and explicit source, and consequently reconstructed the course as encircling the Palatine anticlockwise.⁹¹ Thus, the Luperci started from the Lupercal, ran along the Circus Maximus, then passed through the valley between the Palatine and the Caelian hill in the east (what is now Via di San Gregorio), before reaching the Sacra Via and the Forum. We cannot know whether they entered the Sacra Via at the *Compitum Acilii* and then proceeded the same way as the augurs did (according to Festus and Varro) or simply cut short to the *summa Sacra Via* ascending from the Curiae Veteres. In other words, the question is whether they passed the entire length of the Sacra Via in its longer version, or simply its shorter version, the Sacra Via in the popular sense. Coarelli suggests the former option, but

⁸⁸ On the changes that the Lupercalia underwent in the empire see chapter 3.3.

⁸⁹ *Fasti P. Silvii*, in Degraffi 1963: 265.

⁹⁰ On the connections between *februum*, Februarius and the Lupercalia, see chapter 1.2. On *februm* as the Lupercalia see p. 45, n. 31.

⁹¹ Coarelli 2005: 34-6. Further on 'anticlockwise' in the next chapter.

does not insist on it.⁹² Both options were viable until the fire under Nero and subsequent rebuilding, but after that the Luperci could no longer take the route from the *Compitum Acilii*, but would have to reach the *summa Sacra Via* ascending from the Curiae Veteres (see map, fig. 6). In my view, this was a minor change in the context of the Palatine. What is important is that they had to encircle the Palatine in order for this to be a proper lustration, and that this is what Varro and Plutarch both attest.⁹³

Reconstructing the course of the Luperci around the Palatine in the anticlockwise direction makes sense, as then they have to pass the Sacra Via in order to reach the Forum, and the people familiar with the fact would wait for them all around the hill, but especially in the last two places. As we have seen, the Forum features prominently in the description of the celebration in 44 BC, and a fig tree was planted there in front of the statue of Silvanus. Although the antiquity of Tacitus' precise delineation of the Palatine pomerium is debatable, there can be no doubt that the original pomerium went around the Palatine.⁹⁴ Thus, the wider area of the Forum was most probably visited by the Luperci in the celebrations that preceded the time when this became the centre of the city, which was traditionally ascribed to Tarquinius Priscus, and is archaeologically dated to the sixth century BC.⁹⁵

We have thus followed our Luperci as far as the Forum. The question that naturally arises is whether they stopped here and simply dispersed or returned back to the Lupercal. Again, as the rite was a *lustratio*, it would require them to follow through with the circumambulation, and return to the place which they had started

⁹² Coarelli 2005: 36.

⁹³ Another possible evidence of comparative nature is the Lupercalia in Constantinople, where the ritual was radically changed to suit the Christian capitol. However, as Munzi (1994: 347-64) concludes, even then it still retained the element of circular course (in the Hippodrome), modeled after the Roman performance and can thus only be adduced as additional evidence for the circular course of the Luperci in fourth-century Rome.

⁹⁴ For a discussion see Coarelli (2012: 15-29) who argues that Tacitus' note was shaped by Claudius' antiquarianism and reinvention of tradition, and that the course of the Luperci in fact more accurately reflects the ancient Palatine pomerium.

⁹⁵ For the archaeological evidence see C.J. Smith 1996b: 166-78.

from. To this strict religious observance, one may add a more mundane reason. We should not forget that the Luperci needed to strip down to their loincloths in order to perform the running ritual properly. Roman spring might have officially begun on 9th February,⁹⁶ but half way through that month is not necessarily a warm season, not even in the Mediterranean. The Luperci would no doubt come to the Lupercal from their houses all over Rome, and presumably did so in their clothes. The running and the whipping would naturally warm the naked priests, but once this was over, they would most probably return to the Lupercal, at least to collect their clothes, if not to perform a closing ritual of some sort.

To conclude, there are several reasons to believe that the course of the Luperci was not arbitrary, even if it was not completely fixed and immutable through the ages. The first is our sources' insistence on the connection to the Lupercal and other specific locations around the Palatine, the Forum and Sacra Via. The second is the use of technical term 'lustrare' by Varro, as well as his description, and the connection to the Palatine pomerium. Thirdly, in one of Dionysius' *aetia* Romulus and Remus are ambushed because it was known they would run a fixed course.⁹⁷ Of course, I am using this only as an additional argument because it is difficult to draw substantial conclusions about the ritual from myths projected to prehistorical time (as we have seen). However, we have also seen that *aetia* partly reflect ritual reality, and the fixed course element here seems to agree with the conclusions deduced about the ritual.

⁹⁶ On this date, Ovid announces the beginning of spring with a warning: *ne fallare tamen, restant tibi frigora, restant/magnaue discedens signa reliquit hiems* (F. 2.151-2).

⁹⁷ This he must have picked up from his source, Aelius Tubero, as we also find it in Livy; see pp. 58-60.

2.2 Lustrations

In the chapter on purification, we have ascertained that a number of scholars working on the Lupercalia chose to take sides in classifying it as either a fertility festival or a festival of purification.¹ This dichotomy is not only false, but fails at understanding both Roman religious terminology and history of religion. Purification and fertility do not exclude, but complement each other. Exploring rituals of lustration will help clarify this line of argument and identify the common features they share. This will throw light on the Lupercalia as a lustration, and elucidate the special position it occupies in the context of this type of ritual. Studying the Lupercalia in this context will also support the conclusion on the circular course of the Luperci, reached in the preceding chapter.²

It should first be clarified what a lustration is and how it differs from other purifications. Romans had many purification rituals that were not termed lustrations. In the annual calendar, for instance, the Fordicidia, the Vestalia and the Argei were festivals of purification, but were never (so far as we know) classified as lustrations.³ There was also a series of private purification rituals intended to remove pollution related to bodily phenomena, such as birth, death, and the stains of blood or sexual intercourse. Lennon's recent book carefully studies the role of these rituals in Roman social and religious life.⁴ But Lennon refers to lustrations sporadically, and does not make a clear distinction between them and other purifications.⁵ I believe it is worth studying lustrations separately, as this was a Roman category for a specific type of

¹ Chapter 1.2.

² In contrast to Ziolkowski's inference that 'while discussing technical aspects of the Lupercalia... it is safer to stick to the Lupercalia' (1998: 194).

³ See p. 39.

⁴ Lennon 2014.

⁵ Lennon 2014: 13, 36-7, 63, 104, 159.

purification,⁶ and the ancients themselves were aware of a distinction as they often felt the need to explain lustration by referring to circumambulation.⁷

This was such an important component of *lustratio* that in time the word was used outside its religious context to denote any act of encircling. Thus Cicero applies *lustratio* to the revolution of the moon around the sun.⁸ The verb *lustrare* from which *lustratio* is evidently derived also had the connotations of circling from an early period. Nonius was able to cite Livius Andronicus who used *lustrare* in his *Aegisthus* to describe dolphins circling a vessel.⁹ The etymology of the word is disputed, but it is most probably derived from *luo* (to set free, purge).¹⁰ Whatever its prehistory, it is the ritual reality of circling that shaped the meaning of the word *lustratio* in the historical period.¹¹

Analysing particular lustrations will support the notion of circling, but also explain other aspects of this class of ritual. Versnel argues that lustrations were mainly operative as rituals of beginning, preceding events they were meant to invoke blessings on and thereby often facilitating coherence and unification in a particular unit of society.¹² Regular lustrations are thus concerned with the future and in this they differ from other types of purification, which are intended to remove pollution and negative effects of the past.¹³ The people, army, navy, fields and cattle had to be

⁶ Baudy's (1998) book *Römische Umgangsriten* studies lustrations separately, but fails to address the Lupercalia.

⁷ *CGL* 1.306: *lustrationes: circumlationes*; Non. 335.16: *lustrare: circumspicere. Lustrare est circumire*; Serv. *Aen.* 6.229: *ter socios puras circumtulit unda quia hoc ratio exigit lustrationis*; Var. *Ling.* 6.22: *Armilustrium... id ab lu<d>endo aut lustrō, id est quod circumibant ludentes ancilibus armati*. See Coarelli 2005: 35.

⁸ *sol ... cursus annuos conficit; huius hanc lustrationem eiusdem incensa radiis menstruo spatium luna complet* (Cic. *N. D.* 1.87). Other examples in Baudy 1998: 109, n. 22.

⁹ Non. 335.26=Liv. Andr. *Trag.* 5-6. For instance, Vergil also uses 'lustrare' to describe the frustrated Hercules' circling of the Aventine in his attempts to find an entrance to the cave of Cacus (*Aen.* 8.231).

¹⁰ Discussion in Baudy 1998: 107-8; de Vaan (2008: s.v. *lustrum*) argues the most likely derivation is from the root 'luH-' (to see free, Latin 'luo', Greek λῦω) with the suffix -stro as in *monstrum*.

¹¹ As Fugier demonstrated in one of the most illuminating studies of Roman religious terminology to date (1963: 347-51).

¹² Versnel 1970: 97-115. He returns to lustrations in 1986 (134-71) when comparing Mars and Apollo. He concludes that lustrations had strong military connotations in Rome, and that there is more behind their association with Mars than meets the eye.

¹³ In Rome this is the case with the above-mentioned purification of bodily-related phenomena, and with expiation of *piaculum* (see Fugier 1963: 341-6).

regularly lustrated not only to repel negative forces, but also to reinvigorate them with beneficial blessings and to secure positive outcomes. An exemplary case is Cato's prayer to Mars for the lustration of the field, which has drawn the attention of many notable scholars.¹⁴ Calvert Watkins, the great scholar of Indo-European ritual formulae, called it 'the oldest Latin poem that we possess'.¹⁵ His analysis of the carefully crafted prayer reveals a strong opposition between evils and benefits:

Mars pater, te precor quaesoque uti sies volens propitius mihi domo familiaeque nostrae, quouis re ergo agrum terram fundumque meum suovitaurlia circumagi iussi, uti tu morbos visos invisosque, viduertatem vastitudinemque, calamitates intemperiasque prohibessis defendas averruncesque; utique tu fruges, frumenta, vineta virgultaque grandire beneque evenire siris, pastores pecuaque salva servassis duique bonam salutem valetudinemque mihi domo familiaeque nostrae; harumce rerum ergo, fundi terrae agrique mei lustrandi lustrique faciendi ergo, sicuti dixi, macte hisce suovitaurlibus lactentibus inmolandis esto.

I Father Mars, I pray and beseech you that you be favourable (and) propitious to me, my house, and our household: to which end I have ordered the suovitaurlia to be driven around my field, land, and farm;
II that you forbid, ward off, and brush aside diseases seen and unseen, depopulation and devastation, storms and tempests;
III and that you let grow tall and turn out well grains, corn and vineyards, shrubwork and keep safe shepherds, cattle and give good health and soundness to me, my house, and our household.
*IV To these ends, to purify and perform the purification of my farm, land, and field so as I spoke be magnified by these suckling suovitaurlia to be sacrificed; Father Mars, to that same end, be magnified by these suckling suovitaurlia.*¹⁶

Here we find formulations that demonstrate the idea behind lustration. Watkins' analysis reveals that the prayer is very carefully crafted and reflects ancient Indo-European poetic devices. He accordingly divides it into strophes to facilitate understanding its structure. The fourth strophe echoes much of the first strophe, as the two envelop and mark out the central part of the prayer. There, particular lines in the second strophe stand in contrast to individual lines in the third strophe. The former is mirrored in reverse in the latter, which thus acts as an antistrophe where the

¹⁴ *Agr.* 141. Benveniste 1945: 5-16; Dumézil 1970a: 231-4; Petersman 1973: 238-55 (with references).

¹⁵ Watkins 1995: 197-213.

¹⁶ I am here following Watkins' rendering of the passage, which is set to illustrate his point on the careful structuring of this ancient prayer. For reasons of referencing I have also retained his numbering of the strophes, although without the division into verses.

desired positive effects counter negative notions. For the first word of the second strophe (*morbos*) corresponds to the last word of the third strophe (*valetudinem*). Consequently, the evils repelled in the second strophe (illness, devastation and natural catastrophe) are countered by the benefits invoked in the antistrophe: agricultural prosperity, safety from depredation and good health (in mirror image and reverse order). Thus, the prayer unequivocally states the purpose of this lustration. The duality of purpose is conspicuous as the negative forces to be held at bay are enumerated along with their positive counterparts.

The three victims to be offered have a special role in the ritual. Before they are sacrificed the young, still suckling, pig, lamb and calf are to go around the farmer's field so as to signify the area to be purified. The sacrifice is called the *suovitaurlia*, a compound made from the names of the three animals that make the circuit.¹⁷ The circle made around the farmer's field is referred to several times in Cato's passage. It constitutes a perimeter, from which negative forces are repelled. The area within the circle is then in a way blessed, and benefits invoked on it. Mars is asked to 'forbid, ward off and brush aside' all evils, and thereby simply allow the normal development and continuation of the positive aspects enumerated: the health and integrity of grains, corn, vineyards, cattle, and finally the health of the farmer and his household.¹⁸

The ritual is apotropaic and cathartic at the same time, as the exclusion of evils by itself ensures the future positive effects.¹⁹ This component is similar to Greek purifications where, according to Parker, removing pollution entails the safe continuation of fertility and health.²⁰ Hence, the notion of agrarian Mars on which late 19th and early 20th century scholarship insisted cannot be applied in this case as

¹⁷ On the *suovitaurlia* see Scholz 1973: 3-28; Baudy 1998: 115-21 and Woodard 2006: 103-6.

¹⁸ See Dumézil 1970a: 231-4.

¹⁹ See Baudy (1998: 110-15) who also rightly points out that previous scholars' terming the circle 'magical' is a misnomer as it subsumes a false view of religious evolution.

²⁰ See R. Parker 1996.

Mars here is not an agrarian divinity in the strict sense;²¹ rather, his involvement fits the mechanism of lustration as he stands on the perimeter to repel negative forces as enemies.²²

The details of the *lustratio agri* came down to us because Cato deemed the rite significant enough to record it in his *De agri cultura*. Unfortunately, the other lustration rituals are not as carefully described. Nevertheless, we may attempt to apply the conclusions from Cato's prayer to these less known rituals. Keeping in mind the binary mechanism the prayer reveals, it remains to be seen if this and other shared features can be detected in other lustrations.

Cato himself was a censor and so he must have participated in the lustration performed by the censors at the end of each lustrum.²³ The mythical origins of the census are traced to king Servius Tullius who established the *comitia centuriata* by conducting the first census and the lustration of citizens under arms. In historical times, the *comitia centuriata* was in fact a popular assembly divided into military classes and held in the field of Mars.²⁴ Along with its regular meetings, it was convened at the end of each census when a ceremony was performed to close the census and ratify its results. Livy refers to this as *lustrum conditum*.²⁵ The three victims were led around the people three times, and then sacrificed.²⁶ The prayer recited on the occasion has not been preserved in its entirety, but Varro mentions

²¹ The old view was quite popular for a long time especially among the 'primitivists' (see e.g. Warde Fowler 1899: 48-9, 124-5). Instrumental to the modern understanding was Dumézil's analysis (1970a: 231-4). Most modern scholars dealing with the issue no longer take the old view seriously; see Baudy (1998: 110-15) and Woodard (2006: 232-5, 261-5).

²² As the use of technical military terms also suggests (Dumézil 1970a: 232-3). This can be compared to his role in the *carmen Arvale*, if we accept the mainstream reading: *ferre Mars, limen sali*.

²³ This period might have varied in the beginning, but was later established as a four-year lustrum (*quinquennium*). Although the census was regular, the ritual that usually closed it did not always occur for various reasons, e.g. Liv. 3.22: *lustrum propter Capitolium captum, consulem occisum condi religiosum fuit*.

²⁴ See Forsythe 2005: 111-5.

²⁵ For references and more detailed (but partly speculative) analysis see Baudy 1998: 223-46.

²⁶ As opposed to the *lustratio agri*, the victims here were not *lactentia*, but *suovitaurlia maiora* (adult animals): boar, ram and bull.

that the censors would pray for the benefit of themselves, and that of the Roman republic, both the *populus* and the Quirites.²⁷

The purpose of the census was thus to classify citizens in the *comitia centuriata*, where the wealth of a citizen determined his class and his military obligations. Although they did not carry arms in this regular *lustratio populi*, the first mythical census was concluded by Servius Tullius with citizens carrying arms.²⁸ This is reminiscent of the lustration of the army that was often conducted before a campaign or a battle, and Usener suggested that the two lustrations were originally one and the same.²⁹ After all, the *populus* and the *exercitus* are the same citizen body under arms. For the archaic meaning of *populus* is ‘citizens under arms’.³⁰ The problem with this comparison is again the lack of evidence about the lustration of the army.³¹ However, from the literary sources we do know that the three victims (*suovitaurlia*) were made to encircle the army in this ritual as well.

Given the lack of literary evidence, Ogilvie turned to analyse the monuments that depict these lustrations and detected but minor differences between them.³² While the lustrations of the army involved lictors, army trumpeters, and horn-players, the census ceremony was depicted as somewhat less militant. Instead of the army’s musical company, the ceremony has a seated scribe taking notes, a clear reference to the proceedings of the census.³³ The only testimony for the prayer recited at the ceremony also attests to a slight reduction in the military aspect of the ritual. Valerius Maximus says that the prayer of the rite was changed in the censorship of Scipio

²⁷ *Ling.* 6.86.

²⁸ For a detailed survey of the sources see Liou-Gille 2001: 573-602.

²⁹ This was accepted and revisited by Latte 1960: 119. See also Versnel 1970: 100-3.

³⁰ This is demonstrated by the terms *magister populi* (master of the army) and the verb *populari* (to plunder, lay waste), the expression *pilumnoi poploi* in Carmen Saliare, as well as the *iuuies hostatir, anostatir (iuniores hastati et non hastati)* distinction in the Iguvine Tables (Forsythe 2005: 181-2).

³¹ The sources refer to it sporadically, and it also had a later offspring, the lustration of the navy when Rome became a seapower. Both the *lustratio exercitus* and *lustratio classis* are best attested in Livy (3.22.5; 23.35; 35.9; 36.42; 29.27; 42.20) and Appian (*Hisp.* 19; *BC* 4.89; 5.96).

³² Ogilvie 1961: 36-40: Trajan’s Column (scenes 8, 53, 103); Diocletian’s column in Rome; the frieze of the Augustan arch at Susa; the Arch of Constantine, and the so-called Ahenobarbus monument (for which see Stalp 2001). He also discusses lustrations on Umbrian *tabulae Iguvinae*.

³³ On the function of scribes in the census see Varro *Ling* 6.86 and Meyer 2004: 92-5.

Africanus. Before that time the prayer had petitioned the gods to make the possessions of the Roman people more prosperous and extensive. ‘They are good and big enough as it is’ he said, ‘and therefore, I ask that you preserve them forever intact’.³⁴ The modification was immediately registered in the tablets and preserved for future rites.³⁵ Thus, the little information we have on the census prayer resembles Cato’s prayer, with the intention of maintaining the security and integrity of Roman territory. This aim was again to be formally accomplished by encircling an area of land, thereby creating a symbolic perimeter from which evils are repelled and onto which blessings are invoked.³⁶

While in the case of *lustratio agri* the area within the circle was a farm or a field, in the census and the *lustratio exercitus* men are involved in their social functions, as recruits or potential soldiers in the former and as real soldiers in the field in the latter case. By invoking blessings on them, the lustration has the function of unifying these different individuals and groups, and shaping coherent social units. That is why a lustration of the *comitia centuriata* was conducted at the beginning of each *lustrum* and that of the army was frequently undertaken by a general when assuming command or just before a military campaign.³⁷ Also, in the lustration of the army and the census ceremony, the presence of military overtones is much more striking than in the *lustratio agri*, an agricultural context where the presence of Mars seemed so strange that it became a contentious issue in the scholarship.

Other than Cato’s lustration of the field, there seem to be other agricultural rites, whose poor attestation has caused numerous confusing attempts at

³⁴ Val. Max. 4.1.10: ‘*satis*’ inquit ‘*bonae et magnae sunt: itaque precor ut eas perpetuo incolumes servant*’. Of course, the change was probably not so dramatic and on the spot as Valerius has it (see North 1976: 3).

³⁵ The *Carmen Saeculare* underwent an analogous development in the Augustan era, with a change of emphasis from apotropaic petition to preservation of the current state of blessing (Putnam 2001: 98).

³⁶ See Baudy (1998: 215-21) who agrees with this conclusion and also discusses the lustration of the fleet, which was very similar to that of the army.

³⁷ The lustration thus closed the census and opened a new period (*lustrum, quinquennium*) at the same time. See Versnel 1970: 100-3; Baudy 1998: 218-21.

classification. The most disputed case is that of the Ambarvalia. *Ambarvalis* is a term used by Servius and Macrobius (following Festus) to denote the victim in a ritual of Ceres described by Vergil in his *Georgics*.³⁸ In this case, the first fruits of the season were lustrated ahead of the harvest. Scholars have conjectured that the rite was part of Ambarvalia, but this can hardly be inferred from the two late sources that qualify the victim with the adjective ‘ambarvalic’.³⁹ More precisely, Servius identified the most likely victim as *porca*.⁴⁰ If we connect Vergil’s rite to Ceres with Ovid’s description of the Cerialia, where the victim is indeed a pig, a more likely identification emerges.⁴¹ The ritual also involved the circling of a field three times, and the offering of a pig to Ceres demonstrates that Mars was not the sole recipient of lustration rites. Offering first fruits is done *pro frugibus* (as Festus has it), i.e. to ensure that the rest of the produce would be just as valuable and not harmed by hail or other adversities, but kept safe to the end.⁴²

Scholars have often likened this ritual to one described by Tibullus at the beginning of book two of his *Elegies*. However, Tibullus’ passage seems to be more a poetic description of a generic festival than any specific lustration of the fields.⁴³ The deities invoked are the vague *dii patrii*, and the mention of Bacchus and Ceres, which most of the scholarship takes for granted, is better read as a poetic expression of a desire for bread and wine, or more generally food and drink at a village festivity.⁴⁴ Tibullus’ use of elaborate language and learned references to religious ceremonies

³⁸ *G.* 1.335-50; Serv. *ad loc.*, *Ecl.* 3.77; Macr. *Sat.* 3.5.7; Paul. *Fest.* 5L.

³⁹ This need not mean anything more than that this was a type of agricultural lustration, not necessarily the Ambarvalia itself. Discussion in Baudy 1998: 149-58; Woodard 2006: 118-28.

⁴⁰ *FELIX HOSTIA id est fecunda. dicit autem ambarvale sacrificium, quod de porca et saepe fecunda et gravida fieri consueverat* (Serv. *G.* 1.345).

⁴¹ *F.* 3.393-416; See also *F.* 1.349-53. The timing also fits: Cerialia was celebrated on April 12, and Vergil places his *annua magna sacra...Cerei...extremae sub casum hiemis, sub vere sereno*.

⁴² Macr. (*Sat.* 3.5.7): *ambarvalis hostia est, ut ait Pompeius Festus, quae rei divinae causa circum arva ducitur ab his qui pro frugibus faciunt*.

⁴³ *Eleg.* 2.1. However, this has not stopped most scholars from identifying it with the festival (see Harmon 1983: 1943-55; Baudy 1998: 127-47; Woodard 2006: 128-30; Lennon 2014: 37, 63). Of course, the same might be true of the aforementioned rite in Vergil, although this is less likely.

⁴⁴ Which reverberates throughout the rest of the poem and is openly declared at 2.1.27-30.

gives some parts a realistic impression, but is in fact completely in line with Callimachean poetics, as Cairns argues.⁴⁵

While Vergil's lustration is set to ensure a good harvest, the *feriae Sementivae*, which Ovid covered extensively in the *Fasti*, were concerned with sowing.⁴⁶ They were *feriae conceptivae*, with no fixed date, as the date of the sowing season depends on the weather.⁴⁷ A pregnant sow was offered to Ceres and Tellus, and Ovid implicitly compares this with the land, which now brims with seeds.⁴⁸ As in the harvest ritual, here at the very beginning of the agricultural cycle, the intention is to ward off all potential calamities, which Ovid lists at length while praying for a safe and bountiful produce. In both aspects of the prayer, the mechanism of lustration is instantly recognisable.⁴⁹

As to the Ambarvalia, various identifications of it have been attempted, but the fact is that the word 'Ambarvalia' is only mentioned in a damaged passage of *Historia Augusta*, a source otherwise infamous for its unreliability.⁵⁰ Yet scholars infer its existence mostly on the basis of a note in *Menologia rustica*, farmers' almanacs that provided information related to agricultural activities. There, a note in May reads *Segetes lustrantur*, but which ritual is implied is anyone's guess.⁵¹ In a short passage Strabo refers to a celebration of a festival he calls Ἀμβραουλία, which, on evidence as slim as this, is usually taken to be the 'public Ambarvalia'.⁵² Following

⁴⁵ Cairns 1979: 126-34.

⁴⁶ *F.* 1.657-96.

⁴⁷ Scholars have attempted to identify *feriae Sementivae* with the Paganalia, another rural festival. There are problems with this identification as well. See S. J. Green 2004: 309; Baudy 1998: 181-95.

⁴⁸ *F.* 1.662, 672. On sows and pigs as offerings see Brouwer 1989: 349-52.

⁴⁹ In his poetic description, Ovid dedicates much space to the prayer, but does not refer to the victim encircling the fields. This was implied in the technical term *lustrare: pagum lustrate coloni* (1.669). For a similar pattern in Ovid's prayer of the Parilia see Woodard 2013: 10-30.

⁵⁰ *deinde aliis manus porrigentibus, aliis pedibus in sententias euntibus, plerisque verbo consentientibus conditum est senatus consultum. itum deinde ad templum, inspecti libri, proditi versus, lustra<ta> urbs, cantata carmina, a<m>burbiium celebratum, a<m>bar<v>a<l>ia promissa, atque ita sollemnitas, quae iubebatur, expleta est* (SHA Aurelian 20.3). There is no implication here that any of the measures taken were regular yearly rituals.

⁵¹ Degrassi 1963: 288. It might even be Cato's *lustratio agri*. See the discussion in Baudy (1998: 149-59) who argues that it is Vergil's lustration of the field. However, we have seen above that Vergil explicitly says *sacra Cereri* (which is in April).

⁵² *Geo.* 5.3.2.

earlier scholars, Baudy has gone so far as to identify the latter with the rituals of the *fratres Arvales*, but Woodard has rightly questioned the notion.⁵³ These agricultural rites show us how careful one must be when treating poorly attested Roman rituals. Instead of imposing concepts such as ‘public’ and ‘private Ambarvalia’, we should resist the urge towards classification, and turn to the sources to see how these rituals were used and in which context they are presented.

The aforementioned passage of *Historia Augusta* puts Amburbium alongside the Ambarvalia in a series of other ritual measures taken to avert danger.⁵⁴ The account in the *Vita Aureliani* reads that the German tribe of Marcomanni reached deep into the empire and threatened Rome itself.⁵⁵ The Sibylline books were consulted and ritual measures taken, apparently to avert the danger and maintain the security of the city. Despite the unreliability of our source, the reason it provides for the ritual corresponds to the lustration of the city in the Republic. Lucan describes a *lustratio urbis*, taken as an extraordinary measure in 49 BC when Caesar marched on Rome. None of the historians mention this episode and Lucan’s poetic description should otherwise not be taken for granted, but even if the event is entirely fabricated, the lustration of the city again appears as an extraordinary measure in the face of impending danger.⁵⁶ Another poetic example comes from Silius Italicus who mentions a lustration performed after Hannibal lifted the siege of Rome.⁵⁷ If there is indeed a pattern behind these instances, the mechanism of lustration would naturally apply to such cases where the intention is to avert the enemy and bolster the

⁵³ Baudy 1998: 174-9; Woodard (2006: 133-5, 142-64) proposes an Indo-European origin for the rituals of the Arvales.

⁵⁴ Baudy 1998: 171-4.

⁵⁵ It is more probable that the invading tribe were in fact the Iuthungi. See Watson 2004: 50-2 and Saunders 1992: 311-27.

⁵⁶ Lucan’s lustration (1.584-638) should be taken with reserve as his work is otherwise known for aberrations in the area of Roman religion. For instance, he is the only source to claim that the captives in the triumph would go after the Roman general when all other sources attest to the contrary (Lucan 3.77-8; Beard 2007: 125).

⁵⁷ Sil. 12.752.

defenders.⁵⁸ The effect is similar in city lustrations that followed a prodigy: a procession sought to expiate the prodigy and reinforce community bonds.⁵⁹ As Rosenberger argues, such procedures were strong means of communication, both with the divine, and between different social groups.⁶⁰

The city also had regular lustrations inscribed in the calendar, the Tubilustrium and Armilustrium. The former was the ceremony of the purification of trumpets (*tubae*) held every year on 23rd of both March and May. The ritual is poorly attested and it is not clear what the trumpets were used for (or how exactly they were purified).⁶¹ It was preceded by the Quinquatrus, a festival of Mars, when the Salii danced in the *comitium* in the presence of priestly and military authorities.⁶² Scholars frequently connect the Quinquatrus with the Tubilustrium to argue that they marked the opening of the military season in March, with the purpose of making the army fit for war (inferring these were army trumpets). However, Rüpke first sought to dispute this notion in general,⁶³ and now convincingly argues that the Tubilustrium was originally a day that recurred regularly (every month),⁶⁴ which means its double appearance in March and May is only a vestige of that system. This seriously challenges the idea that Tubilustrium was part of a cycle of military festivals. However, the dances of the Salii in March and at the Armilustrium in October⁶⁵ do correspond to opening and closing of the military season. Granted, the poor

⁵⁸ Circling with the victims was also a part of the ritual: Paul. *Fest.* 5L: *Amburbiales hostiae dicebantur, quae circum terminos urbis Romae ducebantur*. Also mentioned in Lucan (1.590-5).

⁵⁹ Liv. 21.62.6-8. Iulius Obsequens frequently mentions city lustration as a means of prodigy expiation (12, 13, 27a, 36, 44, 44a, 46, 48, 49, 52, 53, 63), but it is not always clear whether this is *lustratio urbis* or simply a purification of some sort.

⁶⁰ Rosenberger 2007: 295-8. See also Šterbenc-Erker 2009: 170-1.

⁶¹ *Fast. Praen.*; Varro *Ling.* 6.14; Festus 480L; Ov. *F.* 3.849-50; Lyd. *Mens.* 4.60. In both March and May the following day was marked in the Calendars as Q.R.C.F. (see Scullard 1981: 92-95, 123).

⁶² It is unclear whether Mars and Minerva shared the festival day or if she came to replace Nerio, a consort of Mars (see Scullard 1981: 92-4). The connection to Mars must be old as the day involved the rites of the Salii; see *Fast. Praen.* and Varro *Ling.* 5.85: *Salii ab salitando, quod facere in comitiis in sacris quotannis et solent et debent*. See also *Ling.* 6.14; Fest. 134L and Charisius in *Grammatici Latini* (Keil) 1.81.

⁶³ Rüpke 1990: 23-6 (with references).

⁶⁴ Like the Kalendae, Nones and the Ides. See J. Rüpke 2011: 24-32; 2012: 96-100.

⁶⁵ Var. *Ling.* 6.22; 5.153; Paul. *Fest.* s.v. *armilustrium*. Ioannes Lydus (*de Mens.* 4.34) obviously confuses the Tubilustrium and Armilustrium. Plutarch (*Rom.* 23.3) knows of the latter as a place on the Aventine.

attestation of these rites prevents drawing substantial conclusions, but Rüpke seems to unjustly dispute Varro's reliable testimony, which confirms that the *Armilustrum* also involved the act of circling (*quod circumibant ludentes ancilibus armati*).⁶⁶

This brief survey of lustrations has not only confirmed the notion of what I call 'the mechanism of lustration' (in all the rituals that are sufficiently well attested) but also brought into focus some individual rituals and their particular social and religious circumstances. Other than the common mechanism of warding off calamities and invoking future success, other patterns can be detected. If the relationship between the lustrations of the *Salii* in March and October overlap with beginning and the end of the military season, Ovid's *feriae Sementivae* and Vergil's *sacra Cereri* seem to accompany the sowing and the harvest, respectively.⁶⁷ Both are placed at key moments of Rome's religious calendar, and bracket essential components of its social life. The former pair seems to have military concerns, while the latter is directed towards the produce of the land, i.e. fertility.

Fertility and the military aspect seem to be separated between these two pairs, but we saw that they were much more closely connected in Cato's *lustratio agri* and the census. These two aspects of lustration reflect the needs and concerns of Roman society. In the Republic, the same citizen played the role of the farmer, the soldier and often was a politician as well. Cato the Elder was a farmer, he served in the Punic wars, and as censor he also conducted the lustration of the people. We are also reminded of the mythical example of Cincinnatus, who was summoned from his fields to serve as dictator in a military emergency.⁶⁸ Many Roman authors inform us of the

⁶⁶ *Armilustrum ab eo quod in armilustrio armati sacra faciunt, nisi locus potius dictus ab his; sed quod de his prius, id ab lu<d>endo aut lustris, id est quod circumibant ludentes ancilibus armati* (Var. *Ling.* 6,22).

⁶⁷ This is reminiscent of Pliny's note (*HN.* 18.8) on three agrarian deities that had images in the Circus Maximus: *Seia*, *Segesta* and one whose name must not be mentioned. *Seia* is clearly derived from *serere* (to sow), and *Segesta* from *seges* (harvest).

⁶⁸ Liv. 3.26; Ogilvie 1965: *ad loc.*

belief that fields will be more fertile if they are tilled by successful soldiers and generals.⁶⁹

How do these conclusion apply to the Lupercalia? Firstly, it now becomes clear that the stumbling block of many critics, the false dichotomy between purification and fertility cannot stand: lustration's binary mechanism of removing negative and procuring positive force must apply to the Lupercalia as well. The purpose of the rite presents an opposition between sterility and female fertility, and a number of sources clearly express this binary relationship.⁷⁰

Secondly, the census, as well as the lustrations of the army and the city all have a unifying effect, which helps understand Varro's explanation of the Lupercalia as a lustration of the ancient Palatine city. The function of these lustrations is partly to reinforce the coherence of a community and maintain its safety and stability, and partly to remove from it all negative forces and ensure prosperity. The crowds that frequented the Lupercalia clearly confirm that it shares this social dimension with other lustrations. Many of the numerous participants engaged in the ritual were more than mere onlookers, and if the Luperci would at some point lash anyone who came their way (as Plutarch claims)⁷¹ this was a consequence of understanding the ritual as a purification of the whole community.

Finally, in view of the fact that circumambulation is a regular feature of lustrations⁷² there can be little doubt that the running ritual also conforms to this pattern, which supports the reconstruction of the course of the Luperci (set out in the previous chapter). While circling is the most salient component of lustrations, none of

⁶⁹ On the interdependency between the agricultural and military aspect in Rome see Robinson 2003: 617-20.

⁷⁰ ...*ut careant sterilitate et fecundae sint* (Serv. *Aen.* 8.343); pope Gelasius (12): *Lupercalia...propter sterilitatem...mulierum...exhibenda*. Juvenal opposes homosexual sterility to the fruitful blow of the Luperci (2.139-42) and Plutarch (*Caes.* 61) on barren women: ἀγόνους δὲ πρὸς κήησιν ἀγαθὸν εἶναι. Rose put it nicely: 'quid ergo obstat quin arbitremur Lupercos una opera mala pepulisse ab oppido suo, bona aut inclusisse aut etiam adduxisse?' (1933: 397).

⁷¹ See 1.1, pp. 28-9.

⁷² In all the sufficiently attested cases. For example, it is not mentioned in the case of Tubilustrum, but the rite is so poorly attested that *argumentum e silentio* would hardly be valid.

the cases seem to specify the direction it takes. Even Cato, who gives the most extensive description for *lustratio agri*, does not mention this. However, there may be reason to think that the processions went anticlockwise. Three panels on Trajan's column all represent *lustratio exercitus* taking this direction.⁷³

The same direction is taken in other rites that involve circumambulation. Tacitus refers the origins of the Palatine *pomerium* back to the mythical founding of Romulus, who ploughed the furrow starting from the Forum Boarium and proceeding anticlockwise to the Forum.⁷⁴ This ritual was in fact performed at the founding of Roman colonies to mark the pomerium of a new city.⁷⁵ The mausolea of both Augustus and Hadrian had annular corridors that rose in an anticlockwise direction towards the burial chamber. As Davies argues, this was not intended for construction purposes, but conveyed a religious idea: the visitor circled the tomb in an anticlockwise direction, in effect repeating the act of *decursio* that accompanied the burial.⁷⁶ It is interesting that Statius refers to *decursio* with the verb *lustrare*: *lustrant ex more sinistro orbe rogum*.⁷⁷ The equation clearly implies the two rites took the same direction.

The Lupercalia is thus in many respects similar to other lustrations, but it is in some ways also different, and special. While the recipients of other lustrations are either Mars or Ceres, the god of the Lupercalia is the savage Faunus.⁷⁸ Moreover, the lustration takes the form of a solemn procession around a particular area, which the victims are made to encircle before being offered. The celebrant usually waits for them at the altar.⁷⁹ In our case, the lustration is conducted by the running Luperci,

⁷³ Scenes 8, 53, 103. Casts are kept in *Museo della Civiltà Romana*, among others.

⁷⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 12.24. See also Dion. Hal. 1.88; Cato at Serv. *Aen.* 5.755; Var. *Ling.* 5.143; Plut. *Rom.* 11; Ov. *F.* 4.819-36; Fest. 271-2L, 392L.

⁷⁵ Which also had their colonial *lustra*. See Gargola 1995: 37, 71-80, 216-19.

⁷⁶ P.J.E. Davies 2004: 124-7.

⁷⁷ *Theb.* 6.215-16. Also in *Declamationes Pseudo-Quintilianae* 329: *universus denique populus lustret atque ambiat rogum*.

⁷⁸ On savage Faunus see section 3.2.2.

⁷⁹ As Trajan does. Cato orders a slave to take the victims around. See Ogilvie 1961: 31-8.

after they sacrifice a he-goat whose skin is then used in the lustration.⁸⁰ This may not seem completely strange as the Salii also conducted the encircling themselves (while dancing), but the Lupercalia, with its naked priests, curious mythology, and unruly celebration stands out as an unusual lustration to say the least. It is thus unsurprising to find that Baudy, in her book on ‘Umgangsriten’ explores all other Roman lustrations but leaves out the Lupercalia.⁸¹ The exceptional nature of the festival is the subject of the following chapter.

⁸⁰ This has already been noted in the scholarship (see Michels 1953: 39, n. 10).

⁸¹ The reason is never explained. Baudy (1998: 2, n. 3) merely remarks: ‘Im Zusammenhang mit der Behandlung eines hier ausgeklammerten Umgangsritus hat Ulf, D. röm. Lupercalienfest (1982)...’

2.3 Rituals of Reversal

In the last chapter I surveyed lustration rituals in order to clarify the lustration aspect of the Lupercalia, but also to attempt to position the festival in the wider context of Roman religion. Along with similarities, the comparison reveals differences, and the Lupercalia seems to stand out from other lustrations. This chapter attempts to further clarify the place of the Lupercalia in the Roman calendar by comparing it to similar festivals. The primary focus will be the context of the transitional period of the year in which the Lupercalia occupies a prominent position. Many festivals that are placed in this liminal period can be termed ‘rituals of reversal’ as well as ‘carnavalesque’. These terms are drawn from anthropological and literary studies and have been previously used in scholarship on Roman religion, but rarely applied to the Lupercalia. The aim of using this theoretical framework is not to superimpose it on a Roman festival, but rather to explain its various aspects in the light of a theory that is derived by comparing similar rituals across different cultures. We shall see how the Lupercalia provided a framework for a reversal of everyday existence, but also an opportunity for trenchant social criticism that reached as far as the pope.

For most classicists, whenever one mentions the Lupercalia the first thing that comes to mind is the running of the naked Luperci and their striking women with goatskin whips.¹ Our sources also attest that this was the most popular aspect of the festival, but we should not forget it could only be a small part of the day’s proceedings. Along with its rich mythology, the Lupercalia presented a wider ritual variety than is usually assumed. The bloodrite described by Plutarch was an essential component of the festival. Comparison with normal sacrificial proceedings reveals

¹ For instance, Beard (2007: 81) writes: ‘Ask the question: “What happened at the Lupercalia, or the Parilia?” and the answer will come down to the one or two picturesque details: the dash round the city at the Lupercalia; the bonfire-leaping at the Parilia. We could not hope to give any kind of coherent narrative of the festivals.’

this was an unusual ritual.² Animal sacrifice was one of the most common public rituals in Roman religion.³ It was observed with great respect, the greatest possible care was paid to details, and silence was demanded with the injunction *favete linguis*.⁴ It has become commonplace to note that no mistakes were allowed in the ritual. In extreme examples, even the slightest fault, if observed, required the repetition of the entire process (*instauratio*)⁵ with the additional effort of expiation. The serious nature of the rituals reflected the required *gravitas* of the citizens who conducted them. We have no reason to doubt that the same rigorous care was applied to the animal sacrifice at the Lupercal.

However, we saw that in the most informative description of the ritual Plutarch stresses the striking injunction about the laughter of two young men. One gets a sense that this event marked a reversal in the proceedings of the festival. The strictly observed animal sacrifice, followed by a mysterious and patently ominous smearing with blood and milk was interrupted by the compulsory laughter of young men, an element that seems altogether impermissible in the proceedings of animal sacrifice. Accordingly, starting from the laughter the more famous aspect of the festival continued in an atmosphere of joy and fun. So far, only Binder has suggested that this release of ritual tension (which accompanied the solemn sacrifice) resulted in the festival assuming a carnivalesque tone.⁶ This is an important aspect of the Lupercalia which is all too often overlooked in modern scholarship.

We have seen that many of our sources describe the running of the Luperci as a playful and entertaining occasion. Valerius Maximus repeats the word *hilaritas* (fun,

² See, pp. 62-5, 189-91.

³ For the distinction between public and private rites see Fest. 284L and Gradel 2004: 8-13. On sacrifice see Bendlin 2013: 6002-5 (with references).

⁴ Prescendi 2007: 71-2, 95. A flute could be played to cover noise from the surroundings.

⁵ Cic. *Har.* 23; Var. *Ant. Cardauns* fr. 80; Plin. *HN.* 13.10; Tert. *Spec.* 5.3; Isid. *Or.* 18.16.2; Non. 530; Gel. 26 (North 1976: 1-3).

⁶ Binder 1997: 230, followed by North 2008: 148-54.

joy) to mark the atmosphere and the runners striking women as *iocantes* (joking).⁷ In Livy, the Luperci ran *per lusum atque lasciviam* and the Lupercalia is twice referred to as *ludicrum*, which implies a sporting or playful event. Connecting Livy's wordplay with derivatives of *ludus*, Piccaluga adduces Tertullian's citation from Varro.⁸ The Christian author objects to the fact that Varro counted among festivals and religious holidays the game of the Luperci, also called *ludii* (players) 'for they run playfully'.⁹ In the most extensive description of the rituals, Plutarch says that the runners strike 'with shaggy thongs those whom they meet in laughter and sport'.¹⁰ Finally, Ovid in his long treatment of the Lupercalia, gladly uses the occasion to regale the reader with comic stories. It is the frolicsome nature of the ritual that entices him to narrate an old story full of sexual comedy (*antiqua fabula plena ioci*)¹¹ where Faunus is ridiculed for his lust (*veste deus lusus*),¹² as well as the competition of the twins when they tried their hands at sports (*bracchia per lusum experienda dabant*).¹³ Even without these explicit testimonies, one could only expect such merriment in a ritual that involved a playful interaction between young naked men and whoever happened to come their way.

In fact, Ovid's playful representation of the Lupercalia may be used to illustrate an important aspect of the rite. In the *Fasti*, the poet often uses the occasion of a popular festival to describe the party that accompanies it or to entertain his

⁷ 2.2.9 *epularum hilaritate ac vino largiore proveci . . . obvios iocantes petiverunt. cuius hilaritatis memoria annuo circuitu feriarum repetitur*. In *OGR* (22.1) the twins also *ludibundi discurrerunt*.

⁸ Piccaluga 1962: 51; 1965: *passim*, esp. 35-41, 47-52. Prescendi (2007: 144-6) follows her in explaining deviations from normal sacrificial procedure as a result of the uncivilized nature of the festival.

⁹ *sed etsi Varro ludios a ludo id est a lusu interpretatur, sicut et Lupercos ludios appellabant, quod ludendo discurrant, tamen eum lusum iuvenum et diebus festis et templis et religionibus reputat* (*de Spect.* 5.3). Compare with similar objections in Prudentius who also uses *ludicrum* (*Peristephanon* 10.161-5, 2.517-20, 862-3).

¹⁰ σκῦντεσι λασίοις τοὺς ἐμποδῶν ἐπὶ παιδιᾷ καὶ γέλωτι παίοντες (Plut. *Rom.* 61). Pope Gelasius repeats the word *ludibrium* (mockery) several times (17, 19, 20), no doubt in the derogatory sense, but his qualification is verified by 'dramatic' changes in the ritual, as we shall presently come to see.

¹¹ *F.* 2.304

¹² *F.* 2.357.

¹³ *F.* 2.368. Other than carnivalesque, the story also present the theme of transvestism, which is a frequent initiation motif in Greek mythology (e.g. Achilles on Skyros). For other examples and discussion Dowden 1992: 117-8, 175.

readers with a comic story (*iocus*).¹⁴ For instance, the festivals of Anna Perenna and of Venus, the Floralia, and the Liberalia are marked by sexual licence, revelry and excessive drinking.¹⁵ As far as we know the Lupercalia did not involve prostitutes (unlike some of these festivals),¹⁶ but its overtly sexual character hardly needs arguing. The Romans certainly did not have Victorian moral standards, but running of naked men through the city centre was still considered indecent.¹⁷ The stripping of prostitutes at the festivals of Anna Perenna and the games of the Floralia was similarly exceptional. The release of inner tension and moral laxity at these festivals that celebrated the body often involved the reversal of social norms and inaugurated a period of licence.

For instance, in her study of the Ides of March Newlands observed that Ovid's treatment of the day reflects the nature of Anna Perenna's festival itself, which can be viewed as carnivalesque.¹⁸ The verbal techniques that Ovid uses to question Augustan ideology are here inspired by the picnic at the celebration of Anna Perenna, where the lower classes drink, dance, sing ribald songs and consort with prostitutes.¹⁹ This festival is thus a good example of social inversion accompanied by sexual and verbal licence, which can also provide an opportunity to criticise politics and ideology. In his study of Medieval carnival Mikhail Bakhtin coined the term 'carnavalesque' to refer to such occasions.²⁰ To some extent the term can be applied to several Roman festivals.

Some of the festivals that occur in the second half of the year (and thus not recorded in Ovid's *Fasti*), conform to this pattern. An incisive example is that of Nonae Caprotinae when slavegirls (*ancillae*) don the clothes of their *matronae*, run

¹⁴ For stories of sexual comedy see Fantham 1983: 185-216.

¹⁵ Herbert-Brown 2009: 120-40.

¹⁶ References in Herbert-Brown 2009: 122-5.

¹⁷ Martial refers to the disgrace of appearing naked in the forum (6.77.5-6): *rideris multoque magis traduceris, Afer/quam nudus medio si spatiere foro*. We shall presently see how Cicero used this.

¹⁸ Newlands 1996: 320-38.

¹⁹ See also Wiseman's study of the festival (1998: 64-74).

²⁰ Bakhtin 1984.

around shouting obscenities and finally stage a mock fight among themselves.²¹ Woodard has recently explained the mythology of the festival in view of Indo-European warrior crisis: after the mighty Roman warriors are put to shame and flight, women take their role in defeating the enemy through sexual seduction and wine.²² Bremmer has observed that this festival can easily be interpreted as a carnivalesque ritual of reversal.²³ Indeed, not only are women allowed promiscuous behaviour and use of obscene language, but they take the role of men, fight and bring about the defeat of the enemy.²⁴

Many Roman festivals provided an occasion for the general population to relax through feasting and drinking (the Parilia or *epulum Iovis*). In addition, some festivals stirred bodily sensations through erotic shows (the Floralia) or the presence of prostitutes (Anna Perenna). However, only certain rituals can be termed rituals of reversal which Bremmer applies to Nonae Caprotinae. In fact, the curious position of this festival of Juno Caprotina on the Nones of a month is exceptional in Roman religion, but is typical for a ritual of reversal. The beginning of July is a period of transition between the recent summer solstice and the beginning of the harvest.²⁵ In some societies, this liminal period inaugurated the New Year as in the case of Kronia (with the month of Kronion) in Greece.²⁶ Festivals of reversal especially occur in the transitory period that marks the end of the old and the beginning of the new year. The Roman parallel to Kronia is the Saturnalia, which Versnel explained as a ritual of reversal in a detailed study.

²¹ See Wiseman (1998: 8-11, 68) for the possibility that this was also represented by a theatre play at the games of Apollo.

²² Woodard 2013: 1-9, 35-49.

²³ Bremmer 1987b: 77-88.

²⁴ Many elements recall the Lupercalia: a staged fight of sexy women instead of naked men. Various sources mention a wild fig tree (*caprificus*), used in the sacrifice to Juno Caprotina, but we do not know if this was used in the fight, as Warde Fowler conjectured (see Woodard 2013: 7-8; pp. 26-7).

²⁵ The summer solstice was perceived as announcing a transitory period of natural crisis (the waning of the sun). In fact, at least a part of the mythology of the festival can be explained as a metaphorical representation of the first waxing of the moon after the solstice (see Drossart 1974: 129-39 and Dumézil 1980a: 241-56). Bremmer (1987b: 87) suggested that this was a period of anxiety because the festival preceded the harvest.

²⁶ Versnel 1993: 122-35.

A series of contradictory elements in the Saturnalia had caused much debate until Versnel demonstrated that this ambiguity is in fact essential for a ritual of reversal.²⁷ The holiday began on the 17th of December and lasted for several days of feasting, drinking and gambling. Slaves were permitted to enjoy the parties and Macrobius says *tota servis licentia permittitur*.²⁸ Sources as early as Accius indicate slaves were waited on by their masters in a complete reversal of social norms.²⁹ The ritual can be best explained in the context of its position within the calendar. The old year is seen away through a period of chaos (a return to the primeval era of Saturn) so that the new year can be firmly established with the rituals of beginning in the spring. Such festivals usually take place in the transitory period of the year and can be dedicated to various sorts of divinities. Saturn, however, is an especially suitable candidate for a god of reversal.

The mythology of Saturn is also full of contradictions: a primeval native god who is primarily characterised as a foreign immigrant (*advena*) and worshipped *Graeco ritu*. The god is chained with fetters or woollen threads, yet inaugurates a period of total liberation and licence. He introduced civilisation through agriculture, but his sickle is also a bloody instrument of murder. He is the god of the paradisiacal Golden Age, but also of the underworld and associated with human sacrifice.³⁰ While other scholars postulated various Etruscan and Greek accretions to a native Italic cult to explain away these inconsistencies, Versnel consistently argues that Saturn has to be an ambiguous figure if he is to usher a return to primeval chaos.³¹ One of his key arguments is that myth and ritual go together (*pari passu*) in creating an atmosphere of chaotic liberation that closes the old and heralds the new year.

²⁷ Versnel 1993: 136-92.

²⁸ *Sat.* 1.7.26.

²⁹ Blänsdorf (*FPL*) 2011: 95-6, Versnel 1993: 146-50.

³⁰ Versnel 1993: 136-46.

³¹ Versnel 1993: 150-65.

The elements of chaos and reversal are typical of the Saturnalia, but they continue to appear in various festivals of winter and early spring. The Compitalia was a moveable festival in early January and added another few days to the relaxation of slaves who took part in dancing, feasting and games. In the temporal sense, Scullard neatly compares the two festivals with the relation between modern Christmas and New Year.³² The Saturnalia and the Compitalia were only the beginning of the transitory period of the year. According to Roman tradition, the old Romulean year only had ten months and began with March, and some festivals preserved the memory of this notion. For instance, the first day of March re-enacted a female version of the Saturnalia, the Matronalia, a festival of matrons, when ladies would wait on their slaves.³³ Recently, Rüpke rejected the antiquarian notion of a Romulean year, notwithstanding the ritual evidence and the numerical values of the months in the second half of the year.³⁴ He remarks that ‘competing New Years are not an unusual phenomenon’.³⁵ However, it should be noted that many ancient peoples calculated only the period of agricultural activity as the year proper, and two winter months were thus excluded from consideration.³⁶ The reason why the year ‘began’ both in January and in March is because this transitional period was ambiguous and exceptional, and I believe that the antiquarian tradition preserved a memory of this notion in the concept of the ‘Romulean’ year. January and February³⁷ had the religious importance of sacred time, when the old year has to be done away with and the new year

³² Scullard 1981: 58-60.

³³ According to late sources (Macr. *Sat.* 1.12.7, Lydus *Mens.* 3.22), but there are earlier indications that some men would dress up as women on the day (see *RE*, s.v.). *Matronae* would dress up and receive gifts from their husbands (see Nisbet and Rudd 2004: 125). The same day was also a festival of Mars, with his *Salii* dancing around the streets. To mark a new beginning, the fire in the temple of Vesta was rekindled and fresh laurels were hung on many ancient buildings, including the Regia (see Scullard 1981: 85-7). For other festivals see below, n. 43.

³⁴ Rüpke (2011: 23) is right to object to the antiquarians’ calculation of the ten-month year of 304 days (clearly based on later Julian calendar), but this does not invalidate the tradition as such, clearly supported by ritual evidence (note above).

³⁵ Rüpke 2011: 6.

³⁶ As Bickerman (1980: 45) notes. For instance, the early Chinese agricultural calendars also excluded two winter months.

³⁷ Of course, this does not mean that Decemer was not a winter month. Coarelli (2012: 183-5) recently proposed an interesting hypothesis regarding the symmetry of festivals in December and February. On closing the year in February see Rüpke (2011: 72-77), and for the liminal aspects of this McDonough 2004: 354-69.

reconstituted as in many other cultures.³⁸ Thus, the two months were probably always counted as a part of the year, but they did not properly belong to normal time. Rather, as part of sacred time they constituted a period of exception.

The Lupercalia occupies a prominent position in this segment of time. We have seen that the sources which describe it as a purification festival consistently tie the notion with the cult of the dead, and extend both aspects to the month of February as a whole.³⁹ Ovid paints an uncanny picture of the dead roaming the streets if the proper rites are not observed.⁴⁰ The Parentalia (or *dies parentales*) span eight days dedicated to the dead, from 13th to the 21st of February, when temples were closed, and most ritual activities (including marriages) suspended. In these circumstances, the joyous celebration of the Luperci (on the 15th) seems like an inconsistency. How can these young playful men have anything to do with the cult of the dead? The second problem also bears out the chthonic dimension: as much as the ancients insisted on the connection between the festival of purification and the cult of the dead, the origins of the notion seem to be unclear to them. In this respect, Ovid speculates that times become pure once the tombs have been placated. Moreover, as we have seen in the last section, even as a lustration the Lupercalia makes for a special case. Its patron god is the savage Faunus, and its priests exhibit a kind of behaviour that is more characteristic of immature adolescents than the gravity of a Roman *pontifex*.⁴¹

These peculiarities can be accounted for if the Lupercalia itself is a ritual of reversal. It occupies a conspicuous position in February (a month which is by its very nature liminal) and is the first major festival after the official beginning of Roman

³⁸ Eliade 1987: 68-99.

³⁹ Chapter 1.2.

⁴⁰ *F.* 2.547-56. Robinson (2011: 344-7) believes the story is more appropriate for the Lemuria, but I do not see why angry ghosts could not appear at the Parentalia, especially if the ritual obligations were neglected.

⁴¹ Ulf (1982: 44-51) compares the Luperci to other Roman priests and finds they stand out in several respects, most of all their youth, a requirement which would exclude the possibility of a lifelong service (normal in most other priesthoods).

spring.⁴² In fact, most Roman festivals that can be characterised as ‘rituals of reversal’ fall into this transitional period, from the winter Saturnalia through Compitalia and Regifugium to an abundance of festivals in March.⁴³ Such festivals are not unique to ancient Rome. For instance, the Greek Kronia and Anthesteria also bear the same traits, and they too are best explained as rituals of reversal.⁴⁴ In his treatment of the latter, Parker could not spare comparativism his usual sceptical judgement, but conceded that it offers the most persuasive interpretation of the polyvalent festival.⁴⁵ Comparative evidence consistently reveals that transitional periods accompany the end and the beginning of a year (as well as other critical moments) and are often marked by not only feasting, drinking, but also sexual and verbal licence as well as initiatory rites, the return of the dead, the offering of the first fruits and staged fights between competitors.⁴⁶

Many of these elements can be readily detected in various aspects of the Lupercalia across the wide timespan of its performance. Here we may briefly remark that the problematic ‘return of the dead’, coupled with apparent initiation of young men perfectly fits the picture. However, the first striking aspect that impressed the observers was the very appearance of the Luperci, starting from their nudity (on which Ovid dilates) to their playful behaviour with the women.⁴⁷ Of course, the Luperci actually wore loincloths,⁴⁸ but Roman morals still considered this indecent exposure in public and the word *nudi* is consistently applied to them in all our

⁴² Ovid announces the beginning of spring on the 9th of February (*F.* 2.150-2), but other authors prefer other neighbouring dates (see Robinson 2011: *ad loc.*).

⁴³ Matronalia, Anna Perenna, Mamuralia, Liberalia are characterised by rituals of reversal or initiation to begin the new year in March (see Woodard 2002: 96-8). Note also the Equirria and the dances of the Salii on several days in this month. Other than Nonae Caprotinae, one could argue that the motley procession of *Quinquatrus Minusculae* (Scullard 1981: 152-3) makes them a festival of reversal. However, the clustering of these in the transitory period outweighs such sporadic occurrences in other parts of the year.

⁴⁴ On Kronia see Versnel 1993: 89-114, on Anthesteria see R. Parker 2007: 290-326.

⁴⁵ R. Parker 2007: 316.

⁴⁶ See Versnel 1993: 115-21 (with references).

⁴⁷ We have seen in chapter 1.1 that Plutarch says men were struck, but also that the majority of the literary and archaeological sources stress the fertility aspect and interaction with the women.

⁴⁸ See p. 29, Dion. Hal. 1.80.1; Val. Max. 2.2.9.

sources.⁴⁹ Such public nudity was considered shameful and reserved for captives, criminals and auctioned slaves, not noble youths in the midst of the Forum. From Cicero's brief description in *Pro Caelio* one gets a sense of how savage and uncivilised this phenomenon might have appeared when conducted in the city centre. Cicero clearly has a rhetorical agenda here,⁵⁰ but it is interesting to see how he takes the overtly pastoral and primitive appearance of the Luperci into his argument:⁵¹

Neque vero illud me commovet quod sibi in Lupercis sodalem esse Caelium dixit. fera quaedam sodalitas et plane pastoricia atque agrestis germanorum Lupercorum, quorum coitio illa silvestris ante est instituta quam humanitas atque leges si quidem non modo nomina deferunt inter se sodales sed etiam commemorant sodalitatem in accusando, ut ne quis id forte nesciat timere videantur!

Nor am I moved by the fact that he said Caelius was his colleague as one of the Luperci. The association of Lupercal brothers is openly pastoral and uncivilised. Their woodland company was established before civilisation and laws, if members not only accuse each other, but also refer to their membership in making the accusation, so that they appear to be nervous that someone might perhaps not know this.

This image corresponds to the other sources available, notably Ovid again,⁵² but also the historians (like Livy or Dionysius) who position the Lupercalia in the context of Romulus and Remus' life in the wilderness.⁵³ There can be no doubt that the Lupercalia was perceived as a sacred relict of a by-gone age, a ritual reversal to a primitive lifestyle that does not normally appear in the urban centre of the world's capital. Even their running could be perceived as inappropriate behaviour for a free Roman citizen.⁵⁴ The play of the naked Luperci disrupted the everyday order and

⁴⁹ On attitudes towards public nudity in Rome see Hallett (2005, especially 61-83). Full nudity was rare in Rome and came only with Greek customs such as athletics and public baths, but even there it was restricted to particular spaces. See also Frascchetti (2005: 19), who points out that *nudi* can simply refer to one not wearing the toga of a Roman citizen.

⁵⁰ He is defending M. Caelius Rufus against the accusation of L. Herennius Balbus. Both men were Luperci, a fact which Cicero uses to dismiss Balbus' argument and turn it against him (*accusando*). Of course, Cicero's image is rhetorically blown out of proportion, but he did not construct it out of thin air. See Ferriès 2009: 379-80, contra North and McLynn 2008: 177.

⁵¹ Cic. *Cael.* 26.

⁵² And also Prop. 4.1A.25-6, see pp. 70-3.

⁵³ See also Plutarch: ἦν μὲν γὰρ ἡ τῶν Λουπερκαλίων ἑορτή, περὶ ἧς πολλοὶ γράφουσιν, ὡς ποιμένων τὸ παλαιὸν εἶη, καὶ τι καὶ προσήκει τοῖς Ἀρκαδιοῖς Λυκαίοις (*Caes.* 61).

⁵⁴ 'A gentleman will walk but never run.' For examples and discussion see Frascchetti 2005: 20.

symbolically recalled the chaos that preceded civilisation. In that sense, we may concur with Dumézil's evocative description of the festival:⁵⁵

once a year, for one day, the balance between the ordered, explored, compartmented world and the savage, untamed world was upset, when Faunus took possession of everything.

As have seen with the Saturnalia, the appearance of a return to a mythical period is an important component of rituals of reversal.⁵⁶ The transitional yearly interval is a time of exception when social norms are overturned and licence is granted, mostly in the form of bodily pleasures. The naked Luperci would strike women in a public form of sexual play, which required them to partly strip as well.⁵⁷ As we have seen, for a much earlier period, Ovid says that *puellae* gave their *terga* to the blows of the whip, which still implies (if somewhat more innocent) public obscenity.⁵⁸

We have no direct knowledge about the Luperci enjoying banquets and feasts as would be expected from comparison to other *collegia* (e.g. the Salii).⁵⁹ Unsurprisingly, the aetiological myths used to explain the ritual often include this dimension. One of Ovid's *aetia* describes a small feast (*exiguas dapes*) which is the central reward in the competition of the twins, and Valerius Maximus has them enjoy a sumptuous meal with a good quantity of wine.⁶⁰ As said, feasting and drinking on a public holiday would certainly not be surprising and even less so for a festival of reversal. Aside from Valerius, the only other mention of a drunken Lupercus is again tied with Cicero's rhetorical agenda, this time in the *Philippics* where he portrays Antony addressing the crowd as *nudus, unctus, ebrius* in his famous attempt to crown

⁵⁵ Dumézil 1970a: 346.

⁵⁶ In fact, Eliade, who was one of the first scholars to extensively discuss this type of ritual, included it in his highly influential theory about the myth of the eternal return, arguing that the ritual is a reenactment of a mythical reality (1959: 51-92).

⁵⁷ See p. 35-8. On the indecency of public female nudity see Hallett 2005: 83-7.

⁵⁸ This is where Plutarch's account differs, for he says the women would receive blows on their hands like children from their schoolmasters (see pp. 29-30).

⁵⁹ Scullard 1981: 86, and on *collegia iuvenum* p. 66.

⁶⁰ *epulae facto sacrificio caesisque capris epularum hilaritate ac vino largiore provecti* (Val. Max. 2.2.9); This is not a direct testimony of the ritual, but an aetiology. For the feast see also Ov. *F.* 2.362.

Caesar.⁶¹ I have explained elsewhere why this should not be taken for granted any more than Cicero's suggestion that Antony's behaviour as a Lupercus disqualifies him as a consul.⁶² However, the contrast *consul-Lupercus (ita eras Lupercus ut te consulem esse meminisse deberes)* is one that would strike Cicero's audience as conceptually viable. The only fact that justifies Antony's behaviour is his sacred duty as a Lupercus, a ritual observation of the day that calls for the dignity of a consul to be forgotten and the title laid aside just like the toga of the citizen. If it were not sanctioned by the framework of a ritual of reversal, the nakedness of a consul when publicly addressing the people could truly have no excuse.⁶³

Public nudity, as well as being subversive in terms of social customs, can also have another function. As Christesen recently pointed out in a different context, sporting competitions could potentially reverse the perceived hierarchy because the required nakedness obliterates social distinctions, displayed in one's daily attire.⁶⁴ Without clothes, the only external factor that makes the man is his body itself and it is here that social relations could be overturned, depending on body shape and strength. More important than individual difference, however, is the common factor of appearance, whereby nudity acts as a uniform usually does (as Bonfante proposed) inducing a sense of equality and unity among group members.⁶⁵

The festival did not provide the same sort of sharp social reversal that the Saturnalia did. Scheid and Granino Cecere analysed the college membership in the late republic and discovered that the Luperci were drawn from various social classes, not only senatorial and equestrian ranks but also freedman and newly made citizens.⁶⁶ What they all had in common were political connections. Even the freedmen came

⁶¹ *Phil.* 3.12.7. See p. 91, n. 10.

⁶² See pp. 91-2.

⁶³ Cicero's indignation is repeated in Dio Cassius' (45.30-1) secondary historical report where he additionally stresses the indecency of the act.

⁶⁴ Christesen 2012: 172-8.

⁶⁵ Bonfante 1989: 543-70.

⁶⁶ 1999: 84-5, 129-34.

from elite senatorial families and most were already members of urban colleges and involved in the electoral process. As we have seen in the previous chapter, as a public lustration the Lupercalia provided a factor of coherence for these different social groups as well as the participating citizens. Public nudity, as one of the most conspicuous traits of the runners, would serve this purpose well. However, this did not necessarily involve an overt reversal in either social hierarchy (like the Saturnalia) or sexual hierarchy (like the Nonae Caprotinae). In terms of the latter, the whipping ritual could only reinforce male dominance over female sexuality through the use of the fertilising whip.

In general, rituals of reversal have the effect of reaffirming social order. Regardless of how much they play with transgressive acts and socially unacceptable elements, the result of this restricted period of licence is that hierarchy and norms are re-established as soon as the play ends. The Saturnalia, for example illuminates the contrast between slaves and masters, but in the long term this reinforces the slave-master dichotomy rather than permanently subverting it.⁶⁷ Similarly, the triumph reinforced social coherence and the status of the triumphant general, although soldiers (who were exceptionally allowed to enter the city under arms for the occasion) shouted obscenities and playfully provoked their leader with ribald verses.⁶⁸ As Turner observed, such rituals have ‘the long-term effect of emphasizing all the more trenchantly the social definitions of the group’.⁶⁹

When it comes to verbal licence and social subversion, this is one of the rare aspects of the Lupercalia which demonstrably changed through the long centuries of the Empire. The first indication seems to come from Lactantius, a personal advisor to emperor Constantine, who in a diatribe against various Roman rituals apparently

⁶⁷ This is a well established aspect of rituals of reversal, and previously some scholars argued that pent-up aggression is released on such occasions and thus called them ‘safety-valve’ rituals (Versnel 1993: 115-8).

⁶⁸ Beard 2007: 244, 247-9. A similar correlation can be observed in the *pompa circensis*, according to Rüpke ‘clearly ritualized by its mixture of excessive order and rather anarchic elements’ (2012: 41).

⁶⁹ Turner 1977: 172, see his whole discussion 166-203.

referred to the Luperci as those who run *nudi, uncti, coronati, personati aut luto obliti*.⁷⁰ *Nudi* and *uncti* are familiar at least since Cicero, but what about the rest of the abrupt description? It is easy to see how a Lupercus could use oil or ointments to make his individual appearance seem more attractive.⁷¹ However, the word *personatus* could refer to either one literally wearing a mask or one who assumes another person's character, i.e. impersonates someone. Are we to believe that the Luperci in the early fourth century used crowns and masks like we do in a modern carnival?⁷² Although it is possible that a carnivalesque festival would spur its participants to express their hilarity through various paraphernalia, it is not necessary to assume wearing masks was one of them.

In fact, what Lactantius was more likely referring to is a process of change that may have begun in his lifetime but which was better recorded by pope Gelasius almost two centuries later. Gelasius directs a good part of his letter to a group of people he calls sponsors (*patroni*) of the festival and accuses them of changing its historical form by relegating the performance to *viles trivialesque personas, abiectos et infimos*.⁷³ Moreover, he continually reiterates an interesting question directed against the apparent organisers: why do you not strip down and celebrate it yourselves?⁷⁴ Finally, he terms the Lupercalia of his time an *imago* (representation).⁷⁵ McLynn argued that all this can be most persuasively explained if we take the 'lowly and vulgar persons' to be actors playing the Luperci.⁷⁶ The festival has then become a dramatic representation, no doubt owing to the fact that (at least since Theodosius I) the

⁷⁰ *Illos dico, qui vel inhonesto saltatu tripudiant, vel qui nudi, uncti, coronati, personati aut luto obliti currunt* (Lact. *Div. Inst.* 1.21.25). The first part of the sentence should refer to the Salii.

⁷¹ Smearing one's skin with mud is an anthropologically well attested custom and would otherwise perfectly fit a ritual of reversal such as the Lupercalia.

⁷² As Wiseman (1995a: 10) interprets the passage.

⁷³ E.g. Gel. 16: *...sed deduxistis venerandum vobis cultum et salutiferum quem putatis ad viles trivialesque personas, abiectos et infimos*.

⁷⁴ *Si vere ergo profitemini hoc sacrum ac potius execrumentum vobis esse salutare, ipsi celebrate more maiorum, ipsi cum resticulo nudi discurrete ut rite vestrae salutis ludibria peragatis* (Gel. 17). For other references and discussion see McLynn 2008: 165-6.

⁷⁵ *Si prodest, si salutare est, cur imago potius apud vos et non ipsa sit veritas?* (Gel. 27).

⁷⁶ McLynn 2008: 161-75.

sacred college could no longer be maintained in the midst of a Christian capital. This could also explain the violence to be seen on artistic representations that come from the preceding period (in the third century): the sarcophagus of Aelia Afanacia and the mosaic of Thysdrus illustrate women bearing their buttocks.⁷⁷ This seems to be the beginning of overt dramatic tendencies in the ritual, which will culminate with the introduction of actors in the place of the priests.

The pope's letter is an acrimonious diatribe against those who claim themselves to be Christians, yet organise a reenactment of a pagan ritual.⁷⁸ Gelasius also reveals the most probable reason for his intervention: the actors chanted songs and, more importantly recited accusations against city figures, exposing one of his priests as an adulterer,⁷⁹ and thus implicating the pope himself as ultimately responsible.⁸⁰ In his defence, Gelasius points out that the reason behind such mocking accusations is not to chastise or warn anyone but rather to take pleasure in the sins of others. The pope wonders what kind of a festival might be performed through mockery and singing about crimes.⁸¹ What he could not possibly perceive is that this was only the beginning of a phenomenon that would continue throughout the Middle Ages. As Bakhtin ascertained, the Medieval carnival was also celebrated in parallel to the Christian calendar, although its character was patently unlike that of a Catholic festival. The essence of the carnival is 'ritual laughter' which calls for popular expression of verbal licence, which is otherwise unknown in Christian rites.⁸² Just like the Saturnalia, the Lupercalia in late antiquity was a precursor to Medieval

⁷⁷ See p. 38.

⁷⁸ e.g. *Quomodo sacrilegus non aestimetur, qui abiurata unius Dei providentia et potestate, quam confessus, ad prodigiosas superstitiones et vana figmenta seducitur?* (see the rest of passage 3 and also 8, 25b-27).

⁷⁹ Gel. 2, 6-8.

⁸⁰ *Verum quia nos arguunt segnes esse censores in vitiis ecclesiae coercendis, et a nobis consequenter agnoscant non tamen corporalis adulterii esse peccatum, quod et discuti debeat et iure puniri...* (Gel. 2).

⁸¹ *...sed iam se fiducialiter exertat qualis in propatulo non per cohortionem sed potius per quondam laetitiam et celebritatem nominum decantata est, quaelibet illa persona, immo et religione se praestare confidit, ut sit unde nominum sollemnia celebrentur, quae nisi criminum decantationibus non coluntur* (Gel. 20).

⁸² Bakhtin 1984: 5-10.

carnival.⁸³

With the advent of Christian dominance, the Lupercalia lost the gravity of initial animal sacrifice at the Lupercal, but gained an expansion in its public, popular aspect. It became a proper carnivalesque festival where actors played the roles of the Luperci (and probably those of the women) no longer purifying the city with the ritual power of *februa*, but with ‘foul songs’⁸⁴ about the crimes of people in authority, both those present, but also distant agents who could take on the role of the scapegoat for the occasion. Gelasius is typically reticent when it comes to details, but he does say that the ritual ‘is celebrated with cries of obscenities and of shameful acts’.⁸⁵ While women were stripped and dramatically beaten (*vapulabant*, as we can see on the artistic representations) the visual obscenity was accompanied by an equally carnivalesque verbal licence.

We have no record of such extravagant behaviour while the festival was still practised by initiated Luperci before Christian times,⁸⁶ but the riotous atmosphere and the playful ritual were already well established by the time of our earliest attestations. Without these popular elements the Lupercalia would certainly not have survived until the end of the fifth century, long after animal sacrifice and most other festivals of the old religion fell into oblivion.⁸⁷ Moreover, its overtly carnivalesque dramatic transformation in late Antiquity was a natural continuation of earlier tendencies in the rite, intensified by actors and changed to fit a Christian context, but certainly not completely invented from scratch by those who wished their merry festival to survive the Christian prohibitions. In other words, the seeds of the dramatic

⁸³ By no means do I here wish to suggest a genealogical development, although the possibility cannot be discarded. As carnivalesque rituals of reversal can spontaneously spring in different societies, one would need more to prove the connection between any Medieval carnival and Roman (rather than say Germanic) folklore.

⁸⁴ *cantilenarum turpium* (19). See also *criminum decantationibus* in n. 81 above.

⁸⁵ *religione quae obscenitatum et flagitiorum vocibus celebratur* (Gel. 19).

⁸⁶ Holleman’s (1974: 71-2) attempt to stretch it back into the Republic relies on nothing but Cicero’s note that the two Luperci accused each other (*deferunt nomina inter se sodales*). As we have seen earlier, this refers to the particular situation of the legal case, not a general practice in the ritual.

⁸⁷ As Gelasius puts it: *Cur portionem defenditis et quae maiora sunt praeteritis? Si plurima genera vanitatum multis acta saeculis probantur esse sublata, cur portio quantovis tempore ventilata non possit auferri?* (28).

transformation were planted by the frolicsome nature of the Lupercalia that we can readily detect in the times of the Republic and early principate. Consequently, it is this carnivalesque nature of the rite that ensured its long survival through (at least) a century of Christian dominance, for the popularity of the celebration (no longer performed by the college of Luperci) withstood the objections of Church hierarchy. Although most scholars used to take Gelasius' pontificate as the terminal stage of the Lupercalia, there is in fact no indication that he managed to suppress the festival, which might have been celebrated in this form as far as the sixth century.⁸⁸

To conclude, we have ascertained that the Lupercalia presented a ritual of reversal in several respects. The mythology of the festival invoked a time before civilisation was established and the ritual revived the primeval chaos in the form of public sexual play. The subversive visual and verbal elements came to dominate the festival in late antiquity, when it assumed the satirical nature that would continue to live in the Medieval carnival. Here, the 'vulgar and the low', as the pope calls them, enjoyed the right of publicly humiliating their superiors, thus subverting social hierarchy in such a way that even the pope felt endangered.⁸⁹ There can hardly be anything more indicative of a ritual of reversal. Just as the mythology of Saturn reflects and follows the rituals of Saturnalia, so the mythology of Faunus reflects and follows the traits of his festival, conducted by his earthly representatives (Luperci) in a period of chaos. In the next section we shall see how comparative evidence can shed a new light on the festival and its god.

⁸⁸ On Gelasius' pontificate as the terminal stage see Pomarés 1959: 139-43, Holleman 1974: 20. McLynn (2008: 161-75) argues that the celebration was optional and simply depended on the official in charge. The supposition that it was replaced by Christian Candlemas is unfounded (W.M. Green 1931: 60-9), not to mention the ridiculous hypothesis about Valentine's Day (Oruch 1981: 534-65).

⁸⁹ As Turner (1977: 179) aptly puts: 'The high must submit to being humbled: the humble are exalted through the privilege of plain speaking.'

Section 3: The Lupercalia in Comparison

3.1 Initiation: Typology and Origins

In the last section of the previous chapter, I attempted to contextualise the Lupercalia in the Roman calendar by describing its position in the liminal period of the year and applying anthropological concepts of liminality and rituals of reversal to the study of the Roman calendar. Victor Turner adopted the concept of liminality from Arnold Van Gennep and turned it into an important method of observing social and religious phenomena. Van Gennep originally used the word 'liminal' in outlining his threefold schema of initiation rites, which (as he was first to observe) can be divided into rites of seclusion (*rites de separation*), rites of transition (*rites de marge*) and rites of incorporation (*rites d'agrégation*).¹ Following the analogy of crossing the threshold (*limen*), Van Gennep also calls the three stages preliminal, liminal and postliminal.² It is the central concept that Turner adopted and developed further as liminality, which then became a most influential anthropological theory.³

However, already at the beginning of his seminal *Rites de passage* Van Gennep recognised that transitional periods characterise both the yearly calendar and the life of individuals.⁴ The two subjects in fact formed the basis of the most influential theories of myth and ritual in the 20th century (the New Year complex and initiatory patterns). After his detailed and critical examination of both complexes, Versnel also concludes that the two meet in Van Gennep's schema, one in a process of nature, the other in a mode of social transformation.⁵ While I have attempted to demonstrate the position of the Lupercalia in the liminal period of the year, other scholars have previously argued that the Lupercalia is a ritual of initiation, both from the perspective of cultural anthropology and Indo-

¹ Van Gennep 1960: 11.

² Van Gennep 1960: 20-1.

³ See Bowie 2006: 139, 152-5.

⁴ Van Gennep 1960: 3.

⁵ Versnel 1993: 79-88.

European comparativism. This double aspect of the Lupercalia as a ritual of initiation is the central theme of this section.

3.1.1 Typology of initiation rituals

The most significant progress in this direction was made by Christoph Ulf, whose *Römische Lupercalienfest* remains the only serious monograph on the Lupercalia.⁶ Hence, it merits a detailed examination and a proper discussion. Ulf's working hypothesis is that the Lupercalia was an initiation of young men into adulthood.⁷ He carefully builds up his case by delineating a typology of initiation rituals, claiming that they are characterized by certain traits that differentiate them from other rites. The three stages of initiation that Ulf uses are largely based on van Gennep's classification: seclusion, initiates' identification as new men and a closing ceremony.⁸

In order to demonstrate the general characteristics of such rites, Ulf takes an example from a Swiss missionary's description of Thonga (a Bantu tribe) initiation ceremony.⁹ In short, boys from the age of ten to sixteen are forced to go to a secluded place outside the village where they are whipped and circumcised. Their clothes are taken and their hair is cut. They then spend three months in a fenced camp, where they are made to endure trials (blows, cold, thirst, unsavoury food, punishment) and conduct rites which are referred to using a special code (phrases related to animals). The shepherds who oversee them utter obscenities conversing with women that bring food to the camp and otherwise use expressions not allowed in everyday speech. The boys are made to hunt and great importance is attached to that activity. At the end, they burn the enclosure, run to a nearby

⁶ Holleman's (1974) very speculative study is dedicated mainly to Pope Gelasius' account of the Lupercalia, and Franklin (1921) is outdated.

⁷ 1982: 96.

⁸ In the original: 'Die Seklusion der Initianden', 'Den Kennzeichnung der Initianden als neue Männer'; 'Die Abschlussfeier' (Ulf 1982: 98-102).

⁹ Junod 1912: 71-92; Ulf 1982: 102-7.

lake and return to the centre of the capital in a solemn procession, awaited and admired by the women of the tribe.

Many analogical parallels to the Lupercalia are readily recognisable. Ulf sees the name Luperci as parallel to the special name of the Thonga initiates (*bukwera*), and the curious expression *creppi* (he-goats) parallel to the paraphrase ‘children of the crocodile’, both connected by ‘Affinität zu einem Tier’.¹⁰ Just as the Luperci have two young men ‘of noble birth’ as leaders (*magistri lupercorum*), so the nephew of the tribal chief is the leader of the *bukwera*. Ulf takes Lactantius’ phrase *aut luto obliti aut personati* to fit perfectly with the description of the African initiates who are smeared with white clay and made to dance in ritual masks.¹¹ The use of obscene language and the savage appearance of the *bukwera* are parallel to the uncivilised customs of the Lupercalia, which we discussed in the previous chapter. The running and subsequent solemn procession of the *bukwera*, which ends in the centre of their village, clearly corresponds to the running of the Luperci, who present themselves at the Forum. Thus, Ulf is able to conclude that the Lupercalia structurally fits the ‘Ritustyp’ of an initiation ceremony.

However, Ulf runs into problems when it comes to the specifics. There is no direct parallel to the the Lupercalia bloodrite,¹² but Ulf classifies it as having ‘die Funktion der Weitergabe der Kraft der Initianden’ which enables him to claim that Thonga rites that are said to have healing qualities (e.g. drinking certain liquids) can correspond to it. Similarly, there is no real analogy to the most conspicuous trait of the Lupercalia, whipping of the women, but at the end of the ceremony every *bukwera* should strike his mother on the shoulder and introduce himself by the new name he has chosen, thus, in Ulf’s view, transmitting his divine power onto the female gender. These are of course artificial classifications, and introducing the notion of divine power strongly recalls the theory of

¹⁰ Ulf 1982: 107, for *creppi* see p. 26.

¹¹ For masks and oil at the Lupercalia see previous section, p. 163.

¹² In order to facilitate my discussion, I have called the rite (described only by Plutarch) in which blood and milk are applied to the foreheads of two young men the bloodrite. See pp. 62-5.

mana, advocated by the primitivists of the first half of the 20th century and rejected by subsequent generations of scholars.¹³

As Ulf is aware that the Thonga parallels are not sufficient for the Lupercalia bloodrite and whipping, he reinforces his point on the transmission of divine power by citing numerous other examples from ethnographical literature. For example, the Nigerian tribe of Mumuye has an initiation rite for boys consecrated to the god Vabo. The priest wears a mask smeared with the blood of a sacrificed dog (which is said to be a totem of Vabo) and gives the boys ‘a sharp blow with a whip’. The boys thus take part in the power of the sacrifice and receive marks of the god of initiation, which they carry for the rest of their lives.¹⁴ The materials used to transmit the power onto the initiates are variable and other examples of ‘krafttragenden Stoff’ include various liquids as well as leaves, porridge and meat. However, blood as the direct result of sacrifice is universally prominent and examples of a sacrificial feast (of which the initiates partake), as well as smearing the blood with a knife (as in the bloodrite) and sprinkling the people with it can all be found and cited.¹⁵ The transmission of animal blood is generally a part of the initiates’ identification with the initiation god, who is usually qualified as a beast or taking an animal form.¹⁶

Ulf concludes that the bloodrite represents a ceremony of power transfer onto the two young men, which the other Luperci also receive by carrying goatskin whips and wearing loincloths.¹⁷ Although he is able to cite additional parallels for the use of milk and wool in initiation rites, Ulf does not produce a direct parallel and cautions against directly transposing foreign notions onto Rome.¹⁸ Of course, symbols such as blood, milk or wool find their meaning in context and cannot have the same sense everywhere, but one may

¹³ Discussion in Dumézil 1970a: 18-31.

¹⁴ 1982: 118-20.

¹⁵ Ulf 1982: 121-8.

¹⁶ Ulf 1982: 123, n. 92.

¹⁷ The mechanism of power transfer might seem like an obsolete idea, but the fact is that some form of power transfer is present in almost all religions of the world. The notion of apostolic succession in the Catholic Church may be seen as an example. The same may be said of ‘chrism’ (holy oil) used for confirmation (and other rites) in many other Christian denominations. At the coronation ceremony, the Archbishop of Canterbury anoints the new British monarch with oil on hands, head and heart. I will say nothing of the notion of Qi in Chinese medicine, Reiki and yoga.

¹⁸ Ulf 1982: 128-30.

agree that a part of their effect here is to empower the young men in the process of their ritual transformation.¹⁹ One does not have to subscribe to the animistic notion of Melanesian *mana* or African bloodrites to see how particular sacred materials (especially as a result of sacrifice) can be perceived as having some form of power attached to them. One may think of Roman religion itself, with such examples as the tail of October Equus or the ashes of the calves at the Fordicidia. The latter was combined with horse blood to make the fumigant (*suffimen*) used at the Parilia.²⁰ In his booklength study of initiations, Eliade also discusses blood in the context of the cycle of regeneration in initiation ceremonies: the initiate must first be wounded in order to heal, just as he must die in order to attain new life, a different mode of existence.²¹ The opposition of blood and milk in the Lupercalia ritual can be said to fit this notional mechanism. We shall later consider whether it has a more specific significance in this context.²²

In the final section, Ulf returns to the ‘Abschlussfeier’ stage (‘incorporation’ in Van Genep’s scheme) to point out that male initiation rites end with a period of strong sexual licence, ranging from erotic dances to sexual acts.²³ Various objects are used to imitate sexual contact, usually carrying phallic connotations, such as sticks and knives.²⁴ Surveying the return of the initiates to their village in various initiation ceremonies, Ulf concludes that whenever running is involved, it invariably begins from the place of initiation from which the initiates are meant to separate themselves, in some cases even burning it (like in the Thonga ceremony). However, neither running nor destroying the place of seclusion are necessary conditions for an initiation ceremony. What is invariable is the component of

¹⁹ Dumézil (1975: 157-60, 121-5) had already proposed an Indian parallel for the Lupercalia bloodrite, but Ulf fails to take note of this.

²⁰ On the *suffimen* see Ov. *F.* 4.731-4. Interestingly, both the October Equus and the Fordicidia are descended from ancient Indo-European rituals (see pp. 267-8, 246-7 below). The horse blood of the Parilia was most likely not the blood of the October Horse. See Dumézil 1970a: 215-28, 1975: 145-56. Woodard (2013: 10-30) proposes a possible Indo-European origin for the Parilia.

²¹ Eliade 2009: 60-2. Burkert (1996: 30) points to the role of anxiety and fear in religious ritual where blood is often used to stimulate these senses.

²² On pp. 188-90.

²³ This is at least a part of the reason why male initiations are often accompanied by mutilation of sexual organs, as in the rites of circumcision and subincision attested throughout the world (Eliade 2009: 51-61).

²⁴ Ulf 1982: 130-4.

distancing from the place of seclusion and subsequent reincorporation into society, accompanied by sexual licence.²⁵

Male initiation ceremonies thus provide a cultural framework for the expression of sexual maturation and hence regularly end with a real or symbolic interplay between the initiates and the members of the opposite sex. Aside from this biological background, one should consider the social and psychological aspect of the benefits conferred on the initiates by their new status. The ordeals and tribulations of initiation are contrasted to the joyful and playful reintegration into society, where they now acquire a new identity. Modern psychological studies have shown that the perceived group identity might depend on a correlation between the severity of initiation and the consequent reward, calculated on the basis of cost-benefit ratio.²⁶ This implies that the cheerful public celebration of the Lupercalia was only the final part of the ritual complex and should be seen in relation to the preceding parts: the tension of the bloodrite and the initiates' experience in the cave.

Ulf's conclusion is that the Lupercalia was an initiation ceremony with components that find no direct parallels amongst non-Roman peoples, but with a structure closely corresponding to the structure of other initiation ceremonies and their mechanisms. He stresses that the sources most often use *iuvenes* (young men) rather than any other expression to refer to the Luperci.²⁷ When the time came, these young men had to go to a secluded place called the Lupercal, where they took off their clothes and participated in a ritual of initiation. As in many other initiation rites, animals were sacrificed (dog and goat), whose blood and skin was used to empower them. They were called Luperci and sometimes *creppi*, words that remain resistant to our linguistic understanding, as they are probably traces of a specialised terminology used by the initiates. The bloodrite that only Plutarch reports could be a glimpse into a more elaborate ceremony that must have involved much more, but is lost to us because of the nature of the secluded place and the vow of secrecy

²⁵ Ulf 1982: 134-7.

²⁶ Kamau 2013: 399-406.

²⁷ Ulf 1982: 48-51.

that usually surrounds such rituals, and causes problems for the inquisitive modern ethnologists and curious classicists alike. Finally, the ceremony ended with the reintegration of the initiates into the community, with the young men running to the town centre in a form of obscene play with the women, a symbolic sexual act meant to demonstrate their newly acquired identity as no longer boys, but mature men.²⁸

Ulf's methodology is to provide analogical rather than homological parallels to elements of the Lupercalia. He is careful to stress that we cannot expect to discover 'another Lupercalia', but that we may expect a different combination of variable elements to be found under the category of initiation rites. In other words, we are dealing with typological, not genealogical parallels. He openly confesses that his working hypothesis is in essence no different from those of other scholars who assumed the Lupercalia conforms to the typology of fertility, purification or another type of ritual.²⁹ The difference lies in the fact that his framework provides a theoretical explanation for many elements of the rite, without the need to discard particular details as Greek imports, later accretions, etc.³⁰

Ulf's schema of initiations is still fully in line with Van Gennep, with the added benefit of a copious ethnographic bibliography and its specific point-by-point comparison with the Lupercalia. As previously stated, the initiation complex was one of the most influential myth and ritual schools of the 20th century and the process of discussing initiatory patterns in the Classical world was well under way when Ulf applied it to the Lupercalia in 1982. Scholars from Jane Harrison, Jeanmaire, Brelich to Vidal-Naquet and Walter Burkert had already made extensive use of the theory. It is Burkert whose influence in this (as in other matters) has been most strongly felt.³¹ The theory took on greater momentum when it was applied not only to rituals but to many works of literature (the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* were interpreted as initiation stories).³² Consequently, initiation

²⁸ 1982: 137-44.

²⁹ 1982: 95-7.

³⁰ As opposed to Wiseman (discussed pp. 226-8) or Holleman (pp. 32-4).

³¹ See Versnel's discussion (1993: 48-60) with references. See also Calame 1999: 288-95, 308-10.

³² For a series of examples see Padilla 1999, especially Dowden's discussion in that volume (1999: 221-46).

narratives were recognised that could only tentatively be connected to initiation rituals. The exaggerations produced a backlash and classicists are nowadays more skeptical about the presence of initiation patterns in literature.³³

However, if the theory reached its culmination and became ‘unfashionable’ this does not mean that initiation rituals and mythology should be completely absent from our radar. As Dowden argues, it is too early to proclaim the death of this paradigm.³⁴ What makes the strongest argument for initiation rituals is the age group of the initiates and, as both Burkert and Versnel have pointed out, the needs are here primarily biological, a ritual transition of a boy into a man and girl into a woman.³⁵ A frequent function of initiation rituals is to provide a cultural framework for the biological aspect of maturation in adolescence.³⁶ They are to introduce the subjects into their sexual and various other cultural roles.³⁷

Ulf’s observation on the use of *iuvenes* as a second name for the Luperci is pertinent here, as is the fact that Augustus banned the youngest, unbearded (*imberbes*) boys from running.³⁸ But it should be said that in Latin *iuvenis* and *adulescens* (as synonyms) were loosely applied and could refer to anything from a teenager to a man in his fifties.³⁹ However, as Laes and Strubbe point out in the case of *collegia iuvenum*, which is epigraphically better attested than the Lupercalia, we may occasionally find an older individual, but most of the members were under or around twenty years of age. Similarly, with the Lupercalia we find the exception of Mark Anthony, who was thirty nine,⁴⁰ but the other members referred to in the literary sources are in their twenties (such as Cicero’s

³³ See Versnel 1993: 60-74 and Dowden 2011a: 487-505.

³⁴ Dowden 2011b: 171-9. A relatively recent study applying the initiation pattern to Roman religion is C.M.C. Green 2007.

³⁵ Burkert 1996: 56-79. See also Dowden 1999: 224.

³⁶ Markstrom 2013: 140-45.

³⁷ It should be pointed out that Van Gennep (1960: 65-71) criticised calling such rituals ‘puberty rites’ because physical puberty may precede or follow the initiation ceremony, and often several generations of boys (of varied age) are initiated together.

³⁸ So as not to be exposed to the obscenity (Suet. *Aug.* 31.4).

³⁹ Laes and Strubbe 2014: 42.

⁴⁰ And he made only a single appearance in 44BC which was a result of a deliberate manipulation of Caesar’s, see chapter 1.5.

nephew) or at most thirty (Caelius).⁴¹ The epigraphical data is too scarce to draw conclusions: of the twenty six inscriptions that mention a Lupercus, only one (from the 2nd century AD) specifies the age of the deceased at forty years.⁴² This need not imply that Marcus Ulpius Maximus still ran at that age, for he is described as *equus Romanus qui et Lupercus cucurrit*.

Valerius Maximus says that the youth of the equestrian order presents itself in two annual displays: the horse parade and the Lupercalia.⁴³ Evidently, at this time the Luperci were recruited from the equestrian order, a fact that is abundantly attested on their imperial inscriptions.⁴⁴ A third-century monument from Tibur is often discussed as a representation of a Lupercus. The inscription does not use the term Lupercus, but refers to a very sweet boy (*dulcissimo*), Titus Claudius Liberalis, who died at sixteen years of age.⁴⁵ On the one side of the *cippus* he is represented as an *equus* riding a horse, while on the other he is half-naked and carrying a whip (see fig. 7). The latter side evidently portrays a Lupercus⁴⁶ who stands out between two of his plebeian peers (in togas), and the reference to a *sodalis desiderantissimus* in the inscription might imply the *sodalitas* of the Luperci. North and McLynn suggest that he might have been nominated, but had not made the run,⁴⁷ which would explain why the title Lupercus was not used. Whether or not the boy ever ran, the monument presents us with a model image of a young equestrian taking part in the two festivals Valerius mentions. Veyne analysed a number of monuments of young equestrians who died in their teens and were represented with the equestrian *trabea* and riding a horse.⁴⁸ He concludes that the two ceremonies continued to act as symbols of initiation into the order throughout the Empire. The epigraphic evidence is thus consistent

⁴¹ See Ferriès 2009: 382.

⁴² *CIL* VI 2160.

⁴³ See pp. 65-6.

⁴⁴ See Granino Cerere and Scheid 1999: 129-34.

⁴⁵ *CIL* VI 3512.

⁴⁶ For similar representations of Luperci from the 3rd century see p. 38.

⁴⁷ North and McLynn 2008: 178. But if that is the idea one wonders why not simply say *Luperco desig<nato>* then, as *CIL* XIV 3442 does.

⁴⁸ See Veyne 1960: 100-12. Another potential representation of a Lupercus (coupled with an equestrian) comes from a relief in Benevento.

with the literary sources which refer to the Luperci as *iuvenes*, and the stress on the youth of the twins in the aetiological myths.

The figure originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. The figure was sourced at North 2008: plate III

figure 7: monument of Titus Claudius Liberalis (Vatican Museums: *Galleria Lapidaria* inv. no. 9132 (reproduced after North 2008: plate III)).

However, the Lupercalia would enlist only a small number of equestrians as priests, in contrast to the parade, which is portrayed as a grand-scale event. If the festival assumed this function in the imperial period, we must bear in mind that it could never have been the only Roman ritual of initiation. As Van Gennep already observed, it is customary for a society to have several such rituals, which can either represent successive stages, or different modes of social transition.⁴⁹ The Liberalia was a ritual of initiation introducing boys into adult status,⁵⁰ and the lustration of the census can also be seen as a rite of

⁴⁹ Van Gennep 1960: 87.

⁵⁰ See Torelli 1984: 23-31 (with references), who proposes other potential candidates.

passage, introducing men into the *comitia centuriata* and thus the Roman army.⁵¹ We shall see that the Lupercalia had also been related to a particular mode of social transition, and related to warriors.

We may conclude that Ulf's hypothesis, as a mode of theoretical categorisation of the festival, is certainly better than any other previously proposed. However, it also enables him to evade thorny issues raised by previous scholarship. The presence of animal motifs in the language and identification of the Luperci is well recognised, but Ulf does not go beyond the general category of 'animals'. Why is the festival called the Lupercalia? Ulf claims that names may deceive us as the content of a festival is frequently not determined by its name. He uses the example of a harvest festival that is associated with Saint Martin in a part of Germany, but with Saint Michael in Denmark and England.⁵² In all these countries, the same pagan associations of harvest and geese survived under different Christian names that bear no relation to the festival. His other examples similarly involve an older substrate hidden under the guise of a new name.⁵³ *Interpretatio Romana* of religions in the Roman Empire is otherwise full of such incidents.

Ulf's own name is derived from German for wolf (Wolf), and since he is not a member of a pack one may presume he knows whereof he speaks.⁵⁴ However, Ulf himself acknowledges that his examples do not demonstrate that *lupus* bears no relation to the Lupercalia. The residual pagan elements in Medieval Christianity or the native cults in *interpretatio Romana* in the Roman Empire are part of systems that are very different from Republican Roman religion. So far as we know, it never underwent the sort of major restructuring that would make all its festivals an underlying substrate in a radically new religious framework. Thus it remains to be seen whether the signifier (Lupercalia) bears any relation to the signified (the myth and ritual) in this case. The process must start by

⁵¹ Laes and Strubbe 2014: 55-7.

⁵² Ulf 1982: 6-7.

⁵³ Ulf 1982: 7-9.

⁵⁴ 'The earliest known Germanic wolf name, one Ulfenus, appears on a Trajanic inscription from Rimbürg near Aachen, followed by one Ulfus, also from Roman Germany.' (Speidel 2002: 16).

analysing internal evidence and then applying external comparanda. Ulf applies the external perspective, but only up to a point. Having paralleled the use of animal references to the acts of the Thonga initiates, he happily reports that we have an explanation for why Roman initiates are called Luperci. The question surely arises as to why they are named after a wolf, rather than a crocodile, a shark or a tiger. For the initiatory animal whose identity the initiates assimilate is a predator, but its identity varies across the world.⁵⁵

In chapter 1.3, I have shown that an internal analysis of the Lupercalia mythology fits with wolf identification as a basic trait of Indo-European youth initiation groups, or warbands (for which most of the scholarship traditionally uses the term ‘Männerbünde’).⁵⁶ This concept was first elaborated in Schurtz’s *Altersklassen und Männerbünde* (1902), in a study that sought to exalt the role of male groups in the life of primitive societies. At a time when Bachofen’s theory of original matriarchy was gaining traction Schurtz endeavoured to disprove it by forming a theory of his own. He compiled a large amount of evidence on male fellowships that supposedly formed the basis of social life in primitive societies.⁵⁷ Although Schurtz exaggerated in his exaltation of the male and deprecation of the female, the book drew his contemporaries’ attention to youth initiation groups, with their particular age sets, warrior dances and sexual licence.⁵⁸ Only a few years later, in his study of the Rig Veda, von Schroeder suggested that the Indo-Europeans also had these youth initiation groups, pointing to possible candidates in various Indo-European traditions.⁵⁹

Thus, the study of the Indo-European warband began from a vehement attempt to counter Bachofen’s theory of matriarchy. However, it was soon set to take an even more unfortunate political turn, when a number of German scholars used it partly to support the scheme of ‘Aryan’ supremacy, the most horrifying ideological mistreatment Indo-European

⁵⁵ The predator frequently attacks (or even devours) the initiates symbolically (see Eliade 2009: 54).

⁵⁶ Following M. L. West, I decided to use an English word instead. See p. 62.

⁵⁷ By today’s standards, Schurtz’s study would surely be considered sexist. See Arvidsson 2006: 207-9, but also Streck 2002: 11-2.

⁵⁸ Van Gennep discusses Schurtz’s book in *Rites of Passage* 1960: 65 (first published 1909).

⁵⁹ von Schroeder 1908: 476-8.

studies have ever suffered.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the misuse of a particular model for a political purpose cannot be said to invalidate the phenomenon itself. Contemporary German scholars continue to develop the study of the warband, but with such a degree of caution that they now understandably profess an *a priori* agnostic stance towards the possibility of reconstructing a social structure of the Indo-European warband, even as they themselves gather the evidence for it.⁶¹

A very useful collection of essays, entitled *Geregeltes Ungestüm*, presents the warband model in each Indo-European tradition separately.⁶² Here I adopt a different approach in an attempt to survey the phenomenon as a whole, discussing general traits that are characteristic of Indo-European warbands. A thematic analysis will enable us to follow the traits of youth initiation traced by Ulf (and discussed above) so that we may supply his universal typology with a more specific, Indo-European one. This way it will be easier to show both the deficiencies in Ulf's universal approach and the advantages of narrowing the typology down to Indo-European traditions. At the end of each passage, I shall attempt to relate the conclusions to the Lupercalia and the Roman tradition, thus immediately examining the usefulness of this explanatory model for the case at hand.

⁶⁰ Arvidsson 2006: 207-38 offers a useful survey, but seems to exaggerate in this regard.

⁶¹ Meiser 2002: 2.

⁶² Das and Meiser 2002.

3.1.2 The Wolf and the Indo-European Warband

To begin with the first trait mentioned above, according to Meiser's survey of the scholarship in the latest booklength study on the subject, the wolf is the absolute animal symbol of the warband.⁶³ The English word 'berserk' derives from an Old Norse term for the warriors who assumed the fury of the wolf. They were also called *úlfheðnar* (wolf-skinned) and the concept is attested across the Indo-European spectrum, from Ireland to India.⁶⁴ The notion primarily involves a psychological identification with the wolf, and does not necessarily imply donning wolf-skins, although that is not excluded.⁶⁵ In fact, we find that the dominant physical appearance of warbands is nudity, complete with items of various animal skins and avoidance of processed human vestments.⁶⁶ The very etymology of 'berserk' is more probably 'bare-shirted' rather than 'bear-shirted', in line with the practice of fighting naked.⁶⁷

The identification implies being possessed by a warrior fury, which is characteristic of a ravaging wolf and makes the warriors invincible.⁶⁸ Dumézil argued for a reconstruction of this Indo-European concept based on linguistic evidence as a *terminus technicus* for the heat of the warrior's rage.⁶⁹ In the disciplined Roman army impetuous fury was no longer required and *ira* lost this sense to become a general state of mind, but this might have been the original meaning as its linguistic cognates are applied to the Norse berserkers and to

⁶³ Meiser 2002: 7.

⁶⁴ Various Indo-European peoples were named after the wolf: Lucani, Hirpini, Luwians, Lycians and perhaps even Dacians (Eliade 1956: 15-31). Personal names generally derived from 'wolf' are attested from Mycenaean and Hittite to modern times (hence e.g. Beowulf, Wolfson, Ulf, and Vuković for that matter). See Eisler 1951: 132-45; McCone 1985: 171-6; Kershaw 2000: 157-64; M.L. West 2007: 450.

⁶⁵ For an example in Old Norse *Völsungasaga* (the story of Sigmund and Sinfrjötli) see Kershaw 2000: 58-62; Sergent 2003: 14-5; Woodard (forthcoming). On Dolon's donning of wolfskin (in the *Iliad* and *Rhesus*) see Gernet 1936: 189-208 and on Roman examples Alföldi 1974: 81.

⁶⁶ Meiser 2002: 6-7 with references. Euripides' *Bacchae* depicts the maenads in this state (298-305, 680-713) and the literary description might be drawn on the initiation ritual. See Seaford 1997: 35-44; Holzhausen 2008: 41-72.

⁶⁷ McCone 1987: 106 (discussing Germanic along with Celtic practice). Speidel 2002: 51-72 collects more abundant evidence (not without some exaggeration).

⁶⁸ *Ynglingasaga*, chapter 6: 'Woden's men went without hauberks and raged like dogs or wolves. They bit their shields and were strong like bears or bulls. They killed men, but neither fire nor iron hurt them.' (Trans. Speidel 2002: 67). In OHG *Wut*, ON *óðr*, OE *wōþ*. See Kershaw 2000: 69-74 who argues that its cognate is the name of Odin, i.e. *Woðanaz, the god of our Wednesday.

⁶⁹ L. *ira*, ON *eiskra*, Sk. *išmīn-*, Av. *aēšma*, from PIE **eis* (to storm, move rapidly). See Speidel 2002: 65 and Walde and Hofmann 1938: 718, s.v. *ira*.

the Maruts, the divine warband of India.⁷⁰ The wolf characterisation of the warband goes back to Proto-Indo-European antiquity as we have an attestation in Hittite sources: King Hattusilis I (in the seventeenth century BC) encourages his warriors to unite 'like a wolf pack'.⁷¹

Wolf identification is thus one of the key characteristics of the Indo-European warband and this is a specific subset of the universal predator identification, which is found in tribal societies all over the world. In Ulf's primary comparandum, various animals are mentioned, but wolves are obviously absent from southern Africa. In East Africa, for example the predators are leopards and lions.⁷² These also seemed to be the preferred objects of warrior identification in Anatolia, from prehistorical times (Çatal Hüyük) to the Hittite Empire.⁷³ Of course, wolf-identification does not have to be restricted to only the Indo-European world for us to discuss it as a salient trait of IE youth initiation groups.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, we have much to learn from the fact that the young IE warrior was a wolf, not a hyena, a kit-fox or a killer whale.⁷⁵ The Indo-European wolf complex explains not only the name of the festival (and of its initiates), but also a number of their actions presented in aetiological myths.

3.1.3 Cattle: raids and myths

Ulf's refusal to properly address the *aitia* of the Lupercalia, dismissing them as irrelevant fiction, is perhaps his greatest fault. My analysis in chapter 1.3 reveals that not all

⁷⁰ Dumézil 1942: 11-33, 1939: 79-91. Lincoln 1991: 131-7 argued for a Homeric parallel, which was solely based on the etymology of λῦσσα and hence deserved Dumézil's disapproval (1980b: 132-40).

⁷¹ See Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1995: 2.413-7. Lincoln claimed attestation in Iranian sources by citing a difficult verse in the *Yashts* 9.18 (a collection of hymns to Zoroastrian deities, part of the Avesta) that supposedly differentiates between wolves that have two (Mairya-) and wolves that have four paws. However, his translation of the verse is untenable. I am grateful to Ilya Yakubovich for this observation.

⁷² Lincoln 1981: 30.

⁷³ Kershaw 2000: 149-50.

⁷⁴ In other words, it is a sufficient, not a necessary criterion (see Segal 2011: 356). Wolves originally inhabited most of Eurasia and North America, but their distribution has diminished (Mech 1970: 31-7). On wolf identification in other parts of the world see Speidel 2002: 10-11. On wolves in Eurasian mythologies (Mongols and Turks) see Alföldi 1974 (a thoroughly confused book which is rightly criticised: see e.g. Versnel 1976: 391-401).

⁷⁵ This is not a rhetorical exaggeration. The examples are attested. See Lincoln 1981: 163.

the *aitia* were artificial constructs of the age in which they are attested as many of their traits go back to an ancient tradition. We have seen that cattle raids feature prominently in these myths although there is no apparent corresponding element in the rituals (as opposed to the usual Hellenistic practice). Ulf merely mentions the fact that African initiates spend much of their time hunting. Livy and Ovid hint at similar forest activities of Romulus and Remus, but other sources (mainly Plutarch and Dionysius) provide more elaborate stories, with the twins spending most of their adolescence in cattle raids. These altercations with other cattle robbers cause Remus to be captured and brought to the city, which leads to the ultimate downfall of Amulius and the twins' realisation of their royal identity. What we have here is the typical initiatory scenario where playing the wolf in the forest is a necessary prerequisite for the process of initiation and thus an essential part of the foundation narrative.⁷⁶ The myths preserve the necessary liminal elements of the initiation ritual that have not come down to us in the ritual description (as it could no longer be performed by the time of our sources).

The early literature of many Indo-European peoples abounds with myths of cattle raids, modelled on the same pattern. In Ireland, the story of the hero Cúchulainn, *Táin bó Cúailnge* (Cattle raid of Cuailnge, i.e. Cooley) tells of his coming of age as the defender of the great bull of Ulster and is only one in a series of many Celtic cattle raid sagas.⁷⁷ In the great Indian epic of Mahābhārata the Kurukṣetra war is preceded by a cattle raid of the Kauravas against the Pāṇḍavas.⁷⁸ The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* contain numerous references to cattle raids as the activity of Homeric heroes.⁷⁹ The most famous is Nestor's reminiscence of his youth as a cattle raider.⁸⁰ Nestor's plundering expedition against Elis is presented as a retaliatory attack just like the incident in which Herakles kills all of Nestor's

⁷⁶ Binder 1964: 78-115; Bremmer 1987a: 30-4; Meurant 2003: 517-542; Nečas Hraste and Vuković 2015: 316-17, and pp. 199-200 below.

⁷⁷ On cattle raids in Ireland the abundant evidence is collected by Lucas 1989: 125-99.

⁷⁸ MBh 4.29-61. See Arabagian 1984: 107-9. This Indian epic is the longest epic recorded in history and with over 200000 individual lines it is more than six times the length of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* combined (Puhvel 1987: 69).

⁷⁹ Walcot 1979: 326-33; McInerney 2010: 97-102 whose sceptical reading still accepts the Indo-European background. On the hymn to Hermes see Allen and Woodard 2013.

⁸⁰ *Il.* 11.669-762.

brothers in revenge for their cattle raid.⁸¹ The vicious circle of retaliations also recalls the series of events that led to the capturing of Remus in the accounts of the historians. This is a natural consequence of cattle raiding and a motif present in many other traditions.⁸²

Not only are cattle raids attested across the Indo-European literary spectrum, but cattle also play a central role in reconstructed Indo-European myths. The best attested and most easily reconstructable myth is the thunder-god's slaying of the dragon or serpent (Sk. *Vṛtra*).⁸³ The myth also has a human variant: the god's hero (called 'the Third') slays a three-headed monster (Av. *Aži Dahāka*, Sk. *Viśvarūpa*).⁸⁴ In both cases the end result is recovering lost cattle. In Lincoln's reconstruction of the Indo-European myth of the first sacrifice, it is not just the human twin (**Yemo*) who is sacrificed and portioned so that his body parts make up the world, but also a cow.⁸⁵ These myths provided the ideological legitimisation for cattle raids since they presented the enemies as foreigners and robbers (the first to steal) and thus provided the attackers with an excuse for raiding them.⁸⁶ In ritual, the Greek sacrifice of a hundred cows (*ἐκατόμβη*) is paralleled by the Sanskrit terms *śatagvīn-* and *gośatam* and the Roman sacrifice of a pregnant cow (*Fordicidia*) has a close Indic parallel.⁸⁷

Both the historical instances and the reconstructed Indo-European cattle raid myths reflect the basic everyday concerns of their respective societies. Linguistic evidence confirms that the Indo-Europeans formed a pastoralist society with an economic system

⁸¹ Walcot 1979: 335-40 persuasively argues for an initiatory scenario behind this story. Contra McInerney 2010: 104-6.

⁸² For India see Leavitt 2000: 212, for Ireland see Lucas 1989: 159-63.

⁸³ This inspired Watkins' celebrated linguistic study *How to Kill a Dragon* (1995). For a structural analysis see Lincoln 1981: 103-22, 1976: 42-65. The Roman version of this IE myth is the Hercules-Cacus episode for which see Burkert 1979: 78-98; Woodard 2006: 189-218 and M. Davies 2006: 105-30.

⁸⁴ In Rome, this became a historical episode presented in the fight of the triplets Horatii vs. Curiatii, as demonstrated by Dumézil 1942. See also Allen 2003: 148-71; Woodard 2013: 179-201.

⁸⁵ Lincoln 1981: 69-93, 1975b: 121-45; but see also Puhvel 1987: 284-90; Mallory and Adams 2006: 435-6. This microcosm-macrocosm relation seems to be universal. Doty (2000: 319-20) discusses the Chinese creation myth in this regard, but there seems to be no sacrifice involved.

⁸⁶ Lincoln 1981: 122. I am aware that much of Lincoln's argument in this book is problematic for several reasons: firstly, his attempt to explain the similarities typologically (with comparison to East African tribes); secondly, the problem with his treatment of Iranian evidence (see Boyce 1987: 508-26); thirdly, the fact that he later renounced some of his earlier work. However, there is no reason to reject his reconstruction of these two myths in particular, well received in subsequent scholarship (prev. n.) and Mallory 1989: 137-8.

⁸⁷ Adams and Mallory 2006: 137. *Fordicidia* is discussed at length in the section on Faunus, pp. 246-7.

based on livestock and arable agriculture.⁸⁸ At least three basic terms for different kinds of cattle are reconstructed: cow, ox and steer.⁸⁹ In such a system cattle play a great role not only as a source of food and sustenance (meat, milk), clothing (skins) but also as a means of exchange (trade) and communication with the divine (sacrifice). The bones of cattle might be shaped into primitive tools and their dung can be used a fertiliser and provide fuel for fire. Even their urine can be put to good use as a disinfectant.⁹⁰

Given that the value of cattle was so great, it was only natural for it to play a great role in myths, and youth initiation trials. The activity was certainly not restricted to warbands, but they were naturally expected to prove their abilities as warriors in such an economically important task. Just like hunting in the case of African initiates, cattle-rustling was to instruct the young male warrior in one of the most important tasks he was to perform for the rest of his life, both as the protector of the tribe's wealth and the one who procures it in cattle raids.⁹¹ Consequently, the great importance of cattle as both the animal of sacrifice and the measure of wealth and status for the general population may lead to conflicts among the most powerful tribe members.

3.1.4 Blooding the novices

Stories about an impious warrior's cattle raid are attested across the Indo-European spectrum: Lincoln argued for an Indo-Iranian reconstruction, to which Leavitt added Celtic parallels.⁹² I cannot discuss all the traditions, but Indian mythology presents a good case study with its series of stories about the competition between two figures. In the Indian epics a group of warriors led by an arrogant leader called Viśvāmitra steal a cow of plenty that belongs to a reclusive priest named Vasiṣṭa who protests, saying he needs it for

⁸⁸ Alongside the cow, sheep, goat, pig and horse all have readily reconstructed IE names. The Indo-Europeans also used the plough. See Mallory-Adams 2006: 132-55.

⁸⁹ Mallory 1989: 117.

⁹⁰ Lincoln 1981: 7.

⁹¹ Dumézil 1970b: 139-47.

⁹² Lincoln 1981: 140-57, with Lincoln 1975a: 337-62. An updated version is Leavitt 2000: 209-24.

sacrificial reasons.⁹³ The warrior steals the cow, but she ultimately comes back to the priest. He prays for the destruction of this ‘demonic, fearful-eyed, raw-meat-eating enemy of the priest’.⁹⁴ The arrogant warrior is humbled and ultimately defeated as a result. The crux of the problem is indicated in the words of the priest who curses the warrior for his desire to eat the meat outside the context of sacrifice.⁹⁵ The standard practice for sacrifice in Iran and India was to cook and distribute the meat among those present.⁹⁶ In Rome, similarly, the meat is distributed but the *exta* had to be separated from the rest of the meal and cooked or burned as an offering to the gods.⁹⁷ Readers of Ovid will remember a famously controversial episode of the *Fasti*.

In chapter 1.3, I noted that much ink has been spilled over the victory of Remus, who hastily eats the *exta* after conducting a successful cattle raid. As in other traditions, the raid is here legitimised by being presented as a recovery of lost cattle.⁹⁸ The phrase Ovid uses to describe the action of the robbers reflects the Indo-European formula for a cattle raid.⁹⁹ This action is at the centre of the story, although the victim itself is said to be a goat (an aetiological modification to fit the Lupercalia ritual).¹⁰⁰ The brothers compete over cattle which Remus and his warband recover. The latter then speedily consume the *exta*, thus breaking the sacrificial rules and causing Remus’ downfall. The sequence implicitly points to an Indo-European motif in the background of the story. As in the Indian case the myth is a part of a cycle about the competition between a pious figure and a disrespectful

⁹³ *MBh* 1.165, *Rāmāyaṇa* 1.50.

⁹⁴ *RV* 7.104.2. See Lincoln 1981: 155-7. The protest and the characteristic wolf description can also be found in Iran and the latter even in Homer ‘wolves, devourers of raw flesh’ (*Il.* 16.156-7).

⁹⁵ In Celtic versions, this element is much more explicit as the transgressors’ desire for meat directly leads to their death (Leavitt 2000: 213-5).

⁹⁶ Lincoln 1981: 154-7.

⁹⁷ Prescendi 2007: 41-4, 142-6. Heesterman 1993: 11-23 discusses the element of sacrificial destruction (especially burnt oblation) in a wider cross-cultural context.

⁹⁸ Modern critics have been able to detect a more sinister motif in the background even without recourse to comparativism. See p. 58.

⁹⁹ *Ov. F.* 2.369-70: *...per devia rura iuencos, Romule, praedones, et Reme, dixit, agunt. Iuencus* is here obviously used as a synonym of *bos*. The phrase is *boves agere*, cf. OIr *tāin* < (*to-aġ-no) *bō*, Av. *gām varōtām az-* (Mallory and Adams 2006: 138).

¹⁰⁰ As expected in aetiological myths. Rome’s historicised mythology would otherwise not allow for a magical cow of plenty, which gives enough milk to feed the world (Ireland) or even creates whole armies (India). However, the use of milk in other rituals at the Lupercal is interesting to note (see p. 188 below).

warrior.¹⁰¹ Ovid's intention was most probably not to make Remus impious, but to provide us with another *action* for the Lupercalia. Nevertheless, he explicitly acknowledges that he is here using a native myth (*causas Latinas*) and not a Greek import. The tradition that he was drawing on was ancient and revolved around the matters of cattle and sacrifice as it still does in Ovid's account. Remus clearly infringes the divine order and Romulus as the momentarily aggrieved party is ultimately to win and become a legendary pious king.¹⁰² The essence of this Indo-European motif is the competition over cattle as a source of great wealth and the presumptuous warrior's *hybris* which will be the cause of his downfall.¹⁰³

This myth reflects very ancient concerns. From the domestication of the first cattle in the Neolithic period, the herder invested a great amount of time and effort in tending animals that he was then meant to slaughter. The special relationship between human and animal is tainted by the act of killing, accompanied by guilt and anxiety.¹⁰⁴ Burkert famously hypothesised that the divine framework of sacrifice was created to sanction the traumatic act of killing by making it sacred.¹⁰⁵ He has argued that this mechanism goes back beyond the Neolithic pastoralist societies to groups of Palaeolithic hunters who identified themselves with predators in pursuit of their game.¹⁰⁶ These would be proto-warbands, groups of wilful males who gained pride and prestige by hunting. With the advent of husbandry in the Neolithic period, it became much easier to kill animals and this led to regulations of sacrifice such as we can trace in historical societies: ritual prescriptions

¹⁰¹ In India, the story developed to reflect the social strife between the priest (Brahmin) and warrior (kṣatriya) caste and hence the stress on the priestly dimension, which we do not find in Rome.

¹⁰² Romulus, of course, is not a priest, but his piety is often stressed. Briquel (1983a: 63-4) observes that the later capturing of Remus is in many ways linked to his impious behaviour and it is interesting that Romulus is said to be busy with a sacrifice at that very time. Moreover, there are other cases where he plays the role of an Indo-European priest, e.g. when tracing the *mundus* to found the city. See Briquel 1976: 160-1, Dumézil 1954: 28-33.

¹⁰³ This interpretation would also account for a number of other elements that the critics noticed. Notably, the exercise of the youths resembles military training. See pp. 59-60.

¹⁰⁴ McInerney 2010: 34-8.

¹⁰⁵ See Burkert 1987: 162-76 (with references).

¹⁰⁶ In Tocharian B *śerwe*, derived from the IE root for wild beast **ghwer* (L. *ferus*, Gk. θήρ, Old Russian *zvēr*), gives the word for hunter, thus indirectly testifying to the identification (Mallory and Adams 1997: 23).

and the development of sacred laws imposed restrictions on killing and facilitated social order through divine sanction.¹⁰⁷

To pass from speculation about distant periods to the more accessible past, we may say that the Indo-European mythologies speak of a savage who takes more than is ritually allowed, and name this warrior who breaks the divine order ‘a wolf that eats raw meat’. A pastoralist society no longer relies on hunting game for its subsistence, but the mechanism of predation remains an important component in cattle raids, which provide for a much greater and more permanent source of wealth than any single chase. But the warrior must be careful not to overstep the line. Briquel argues that Remus’ refusal to distinguish between the human and the divine separates him from the realm of culture and puts him with ‘the uncivilised and the savage’.¹⁰⁸ Prescendi adds that his very refusal to share and his explicit adherence to the law of the jungle (*non nisi victor*) pours scorn on the community and its norms.¹⁰⁹ However, the state of the outlaw in the liminal stage is a necessary part of the initiatory scenario and the initiates’ identity.¹¹⁰ Consequently we can see why the commentators (both ancient and modern) who interpreted the Luperci as ‘protectors from wolves’ completely missed the point of the festival.¹¹¹

If the twins in their forest exploits and the Luperci in their role as initiates are recognised as taking on the role of wolves, then many details in the mythology and rituals of the Lupercalia become clearer in the light of this heuristic model. The incident of Remus’ victory ends with Romulus mysteriously smiling over it while being secretly pained (*risit et indoluit*). It seems that both brothers are playing the wolf in various ways. First the aetiology presents them as Luperci in the cattle raid, and then Remus turns to devouring

¹⁰⁷ For ancient Greece see McInerney 2010: 196-240.

¹⁰⁸ Briquel 2001: 207-18. Meurant (2000: 93-5) follows Briquel’s conclusions on this matter in his discussion of Roman twinship and its relationship to Indo-European traditions (53-97). Among others, he adduces an interesting Greek parallel, with the Dioscuri in a cattle raid (Apollodorus 3.11.2).

¹⁰⁹ Prescendi 2007: 144-5.

¹¹⁰ Consequently, as Prescendi (2007: 145-6) observes, it is not impossible that the Luperci in the ritual actually consumed the *exta* of the goat. This would be fitting for a ritual of reversal as well as their wolf initiation (see below).

¹¹¹ See p. 51, n. 3.

the sacred meat. Finally, Romulus smiles in a way that, as Burriss had already noted, is reminiscent of a wolf's grin.¹¹² Wolves are indeed famous for their grin, which can be either a sign of submission or even a threat, if they also bare their prominent teeth (and retract their lips) in the process.¹¹³ Roman readers familiar with the foundation story could perceive Romulus' smile as threatening as one would otherwise perceive the grin of a wolf. Burriss' happy conjecture may gain additional support in the wider context of the ceremony. The smile in the *actio* reflects the ritual laughter of two young men in the bloodrite. I have already explained how the bloodrite itself carries overt connotations of sacrifice.¹¹⁴ A knife is applied to the head of the youths as it is to sacrificial animals, but wool and milk immediately relieve them of mortal danger. Why are they then made to laugh? Following African parallels, Ulf contends that the initiates should express themselves in 'akustische Weise'¹¹⁵ and one can see how this act can happily serve as a closure to one part of the ceremony and beginning of another.¹¹⁶ However, one is left to wonder as to its specific significance in this context.

The ritual combination of blood and milk at the Lupercal was paralleled by the nearby cult of *diva Rumina* at the *ficus Ruminalis* where shepherds 'offered her milk instead of wine'.¹¹⁷ Rumina is consistently derived from *rumis*, an old word for a dug and here again the lactating associations take primacy. The lactation of course is naturally associated with cows (which also ruminate), but in the Roman case it is the she-wolf that suckles the infants. As discussed above, the superseding of the traumatic sight of blood by nourishing milk fits the general mechanism of regeneration in initiation rituals. We have also seen that a universally essential part of initiation is assuming the new identity of the animal predator. I submit that the bloodrite was also symbolic of this notional mechanism. At the centre of the Roman foundation myth, the threatening figure of the wolf (which

¹¹² Burriss 1931: 162.

¹¹³ See M.W. Fox 1970: 55-8.

¹¹⁴ See pp. 64-5.

¹¹⁵ Ulf 1982: 121.

¹¹⁶ As I have argued in the previous chapter, pp. 150-2.

¹¹⁷ Varro *R.* 2.11.5, other references on p. 115, n. 18. In the bloodrite itself blood seems to take the role of sacrificial wine (pp. 64-5).

devours livestock) is domesticated by being internalised into a nursing mother that provides milk for human infants (just like livestock). The Roman mythic she-wolf is such a familiar sight that we now rarely pause to consider how incredible and counter-intuitive the figure is.¹¹⁸ This wondrous amalgamation in the myth resolves the binary opposition wild-domesticated and attempts to pacify the conflict between the civilised and the uncivilised, nature and culture.¹¹⁹

The Lupercalia operates on the same mechanism. Like wolves, the Luperci slaughter goats and, in contrast to normal sacrificial procedure, they apply the blood to themselves. Lennon recently argued that blood was an impure substance for the Romans and its effusion had to be carefully controlled and regulated, especially in the context of sacrifice. There are many examples of ominous events following the improper handling of sacrificial blood, which pollutes the participants.¹²⁰ Blood had to be collected and carefully handled, not ostentatiously displayed on a shining knife raised to a human forehead. The application of the knife here represents the symbolic act of killing, as it does when traced along the animal's back in preparation for sacrifice.¹²¹ The bloody knife carries the very essence of the act over to the youths: *sanguis velut animae possessio est*.¹²² As Eisler noted, the custom of 'bleeding the novices' is also widespread among modern hunters and was still performed in fox hunts in the United Kingdom until they were banned at the beginning of the century.¹²³

Thus, more is at stake than simply the transference of power, which Ulf claims to be universal. The deviations from the normal proceedings of sacrifice engage the youths with

¹¹⁸ Similarly Mazzoni 2010: 5-7. Recent study of worldwide incidents of non-rabid wolf attacks on humans show that 90% of victims are children (Linnell et al. 2002: 37). The ancients often pondered on the miracle and this led to attempts at rationalisations. See Marincola 2003: 117-27.

¹¹⁹ Meurant 2003: 531-40. A similar process may lie behind the choice of a dog (as wolf's domestic counterpart) as a sacrificial animal. For the opposition wild-domesticated in general see Hodder 1990, especially 273-310.

¹²⁰ Lennon 2014: 100-9.

¹²¹ For which see Prescendi 2007: 110.

¹²² Serv. *Aen.* 3.67.

¹²³ Eisler 1951: 255. Boyle (1969: 12-6) adduces parallels from across Eurasia. Falk 1986: 41 and Kershaw 2000: 208, n. 19 mention a human sacrifice practiced in parts of India until 1799 where warriors applied the blood of the sacrificed human onto their foreheads.

the act of killing, and in the context of initiation invoke their identification with a bloodthirsty predator. The comparison may be pushed further if we consider that a wolf, as Aristotle already knew, slits the throat of his victim and lets it bleed.¹²⁴ His jaw acts as a knife and ‘it is the knife that makes the butcher’.¹²⁵ In the absence of wolfskins and terrifying howls, this was a way for the Luperci to become wolves, by identifying with the act of killing. Through killing, the pastoral man still maintains a link with the predator hunter, although now the emotional stakes are higher as the animal no longer belongs to the wild, but to the domestic sphere.¹²⁶

However, the traumatic act is superseded by the application of milk which carries the opposite connotations and hence resolves the conceptual conflict as in the case of the nursing she-wolf. The ambivalent figure of the wolf as both a bloodthirsty predator and a caring mother bridges the gap between the civilised and the uncivilised realm and nullifies the traumatic act of killing. A similar symbolic process takes place at the Lupercal where the youths first face the blood of death, and then its opposite, the milk of new life, provided by domesticated livestock. They are finally made to smile (or laugh), an action which can still be interpreted in line with their identity as wolf-men, but simultaneously mark the end of ritual tension.¹²⁷

In the myth, the sequence is separated between opposing parties, but maintained: the ravaging wolf that devours raw and bloody meat¹²⁸ is represented by Remus and his

¹²⁴ *Historia Animalium* 9.6.612b. The verb used is σφάζω. This concurs with modern scientific observations on the use of wolf’s canines to slash at prey. See Peterson and Ciucci 2003: 113.

¹²⁵ As Detienne and Svenbro observe in their study of Greek sacrifice (1989: 154).

¹²⁶ Burkert 1987: 162-76; McInerney 2010: 34-8.

¹²⁷ Camous (2012: 91-107) also recognises the symbolic resolution of the conflict between the savage and the domestic in the ritual, but he attempts to relate the former to the woodpecker (*picus*) and the latter to the she-wolf of the foundation myth. Even if one allows for this framework of interpretation through the theory of totems, it is still very difficult to see how the woodpecker fits the ritual, a bird for which Camous claims (without citing his sources) ‘chacun le sait – et tous les naturalistes s'accordent sur ce fait – se rapproche de façon tout à fait saisissante du rire humain’.

¹²⁸ Alongside the lungs, the *exta* necessarily consist of the heart and liver, organs that are conspicuous for the effusion of blood. To these three components, the peritoneum and vesicle were sometimes added (Prescendi 2007: 41 with references).

band while Romulus alone enacts the final act of the transformation.¹²⁹ However, in both cases what is being presented is the initiatory scenario that requires passing a difficult test, a traumatic ordeal that symbolises an encounter with the act of killing and death. This cannot simply be a matter of normal sacrifice: the initiate must kill like a wolf and face the blood of death. Similarly, in the myth Remus consumes the animal without regard for human or divine laws. We may conclude that the bloodrite is the central part of the Lupercalia ritual complex and one that simultaneously confers power and a new identity on the initiates.

3.1.5 The wolf as outlaw

We have seen how the Indo-European motif of a ravenous wolf was reflected in Ovid's aetiology and how the predator image might fit with the Lupercalia bloodrite. Remus' behaviour placed him outside the confines of the civilised world and among the savage creatures of the forest. This liminal stage is not only tolerated, but required of young men who want to become fully integrated warriors. The young men of Spartan *krypteia* and Athenian *ephebeia* went through a similar stage that involved theft and deception, night raids and ambush tactics as a part of an initiation that culminated in assuming the warrior norms of the hoplites.¹³⁰ Such behaviour was encouraged and sanctioned by ritual prescriptions only in the context of the liminal period and only for initiation groups. If one continued it permanently, one might become *homo sacer*,¹³¹ an outlaw excluded from civilised society.¹³² The ancient Indo-European traditions knew of this outlaw figure especially under the guise of the lone wolf.

In the Vedas, the stranger (outsider) is designated as a wolf in the recurrent phrase *vṛko hi śaḥ*. In a hymn to Soma (ritual offering) the expression is applied to a

¹²⁹ The conspicuous absence of milk in Ovid's myth only increases the tension and in the context of competition brings suspense instead of relief.

¹³⁰ See Vidal-Naquet 1986: 106-28 and von Cieminski 2002: 91-101.

¹³¹ Various Indian candidates for the *homo sacer* figure (as defined by Agamben) are explored in Collins' (2014) recent study.

¹³² Examples of some of the tactics used by these groups can be found later in the Greek army (see Ma 1994: 72). However, this is very different from the system of savage practices that these initiation groups exhibit.

greedy/devouring ‘miser’ (Paṇi), who fails to give proper ritual offerings and gifts to the priests.¹³³ Another verse affirms the condemnation of the ‘miser’ but differentiates between two types: one’s own (Sk. *sva*, Latin *suus*) and foreign (*vṛkas*, wolf):

uta svasyā arātyā arir hi ṣa
ut ānyasyā arātyā vṛko hi ṣaḥ¹³⁴

Protect us from our own miser for he is an ari (insider)
Protect us from a foreign miser for he is a wolf (outsider)

Additionally, in a hymn to Puṣan, the shepherd deity protector of ways and byways, the poet prays that he may be spared from a ‘wicked, inauspicious wolf who lies in wait to injure us...a robber with a guileful heart’.¹³⁵ We can see how the metaphor of a wild wolf was applied to humans in this oldest work of Indian literature. The wolf is a stranger, a man outside of society and laws, but also the devourer who endangers the social order either by not offering due sacrifices to the gods (miser) or by robbing humans of their possession (thief). The aspect of a wolf as a creature of the wilderness which comes to steal from society is of course based on the biological behaviour of wolves.

Closer to Rome, Servius says that wolves live by stealing in an aetiology for the rituals of *hirpi Sorani*.¹³⁶ *Hirpus* is a word for wolf in Faliscan, a dialect very close to Latin. Little is known about this old Italic cult, which took place at Mount Soracte and was dedicated to a god called Soranus (later syncretised with Apollo), whose priests were said to walk on glowing embers. However, Servius’ description would indicate a connection with the Lupercalia, as these wolves also steal the sacrificial *exta*, and hide in a cave that exudes pestilent vapours.¹³⁷

¹³³ *RV* 6.51.14.

¹³⁴ *RV* 9.79.3. According to Dumézil’s (1958: 67-84) interpretation the wolf here designates the barbarian, a complete stranger, in opposition to *ari*, an insider (related to *Arya*, which implies common ethnicity and shared culture).

¹³⁵ *RV* 1.42.2-3, but also *RV* 8.66.8.

¹³⁶ *Aen.* 11.785. See also Strabo 5.226; Plin. *HN.* 7.19; Sil. 5.175-83; Sol. 2.26.

¹³⁷ The ritual itself is interpreted as a purification. See Rissanen (2012: 115-35) who concludes that it must have a common origin with the Lupercalia.

In the Germanic tradition, the notion of a wolf as outlaw was expressed in a word of its own—*warg*. The primary meaning must have been criminal¹³⁸ and it is interesting to observe how the two blended here. The word is first attested in 6th century *Lex Salica* in its Latinised Franconian version as *wargus*. The man who has stolen or desecrated someone's corpse is to become an outlaw: *wargus sit*.¹³⁹ The same law contains the first reference to the act of abduction where *wargare* is used as a synonym for *plagiare* (kidnap).¹⁴⁰ In Icelandic law *warg* is also used for a man guilty of severe crimes who thus becomes an outlaw.¹⁴¹

An interesting parallel is to be found in the context of the cult of Lycaean Zeus in Arcadia, who was reputed to have accepted human victims. In the cult whoever tastes of human entrails becomes a wolf.¹⁴² Plato adds a political dimension by comparing the ritual to the acts of a tyrant: having slain fellow citizens he proceeds to seize the property of others and must go into exile as a consequence.¹⁴³ Again, the wolf is a rapacious man whose mind is bent on plundering others and must be banished from society. Detienne and Svenbro discuss this passage of Plato in connection to a number of other Greek stories centred on wolves. From Aesop's fables to Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* the wolf emerges as a voracious predator, bent on taking more than his fair share.¹⁴⁴ By his very nature the wolf is a thief and for Polybius to lead a wolf's life means to live by pillaging.¹⁴⁵ That is why as a rule this predator cannot be part of civilisation and must remain forever excluded from society.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁸ Its Indo-European cognates are Toch. B *wārṣṣe* (highwayman, bandit), Russian *vórog* (enemy, devil) and Hittite *hurkil* (sin, sexual perversion); see Mallory and Adams 2006: 277.

¹³⁹ The desecrator of a corpse is also called *wargus* in a law of Henry I of England (Gernstein 1974: 135, Jacoby 1974: 27).

¹⁴⁰ Gernstein (1974: 135-6) lists the instances in other Germanic traditions, and discusses the application of the term *warg* to such figures as Grendel and Fenrir (mythical wolf) and Cerberus (in the translation of the *Eneid*).

¹⁴¹ ON *vargr*, OE *wearg* both mean outlaw, wolf. I am here drawing on Gerstein 1974: 131-156 and Jacoby 1974.

¹⁴² Ὡς ἄρα ὁ γευσάμενος τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου σπλάγχνου, ἐν ἄλλοις ἄλλων ἱερείων ἐνδὸς ἐγκατατετιμημένου, ἀνάγκη δὴ τοῦτω λύκῳ γενέσθαι. *Resp.* 565d-e.

¹⁴³ *Resp.* 566a-b.

¹⁴⁴ Detienne and Svenbro 1989: 148-163.

¹⁴⁵ Polybius 16.24.4-5. Lycophron (*Alexandria* 1309) calls Argonauts wolves for stealing the Golden fleece.

¹⁴⁶ Detienne and Svenbro 1989: 155-63.

However, these numerous instances of the Indo-European wolf as outlaw motif are in no contradiction to the warband model of assuming wolf identity. The very essence of the liminal stage of initiation is to take the position of an outsider who breaks the laws of society. Romulus and Remus have been outcasts from their family and city from the beginning of their life. They lived in the wilderness, nursed by a she-wolf and reared by a shepherd and a prostitute.¹⁴⁷ In order to realise their royal identity and divine origin, they had to traverse a period of savagery that culminated in a test of manhood, typical of initiatory scenarios. This requires the young men to play wolves, preying on other cattle ‘robbers’ in a game of wit and predation that has them ambushed and Remus captured. The fact that some of our historical sources present the ambush at the time of the Lupercalia is no coincidence. The Lupercalia was the ritual counterpart of the foundation narrative, and both forms were constructed on the same initiatory pattern with its liminal stage of cattle raiding.¹⁴⁸

However, the connections between the Indo-European wolf as outlaw theme and the foundation narrative do not end here. Having restored Numitor to the throne, the twins refuse to peacefully settle in Alba Longa. They are beckoned by the wilderness to go back and found a new city. Not coincidentally, the chosen spot is at the Lupercal, the cave of the she-wolf, the cave from which the Luperci emerge to celebrate their rituals. The myth and the ritual are so intertwined here that it is difficult to say which is older, the chicken or the egg. After the foundation, Romulus kills his brother and as the sole and undisputed *alpha* male increases his pack of wolves. In his asylum, he gathers outcasts of all sorts ‘free and slave indiscriminately’, as Livy says.¹⁴⁹ The small wolf pack turns into a very large group of males, but they are one essential element short of forming a society—women.¹⁵⁰ The myth of the rape of Sabines is thus inseparable from the myth of the asylum and this also has an

¹⁴⁷ It is wrong to suppose that Acca Larentia as *lupa* is simply a rationalisation of an earlier animal figure (see Nečas Hraste and Vuković 2015: 313-38).

¹⁴⁸ As discussed above, under heading 3.1.3.

¹⁴⁹ 1.8.6. Plutarch (*Rom.* 9.3) says everyone was received, including slaves, debtors and murderers. Dion. Hal. (2.15.4) intentionally obfuscates this lest it interfere with his portrayal of the noble Greek origins of Rome.

¹⁵⁰ Briquel 1976: 170-4.

Indo-European background.¹⁵¹ In the next heading we shall see how the rape of the Sabines relates to the Lupercalia.

3.1.6 Women and the warband

From a linguistic perspective, the reconstructed terminology pertaining to marriage amongst the Indo-Europeans includes at least two different forms. One is marriage as an act of exchange, which uses the same terminology as other acts of mutual exchange. The other seems to refer to an act of abduction with the verb **Hwedh* ‘carry off a bride by force’, attested in various Indo-European traditions.¹⁵² The memory of this institution was retained in many myths, but also in concrete form, as a part of legal texts. A Hittite law code speaks of a specific form of bride abduction: not only is this not a crime, but even if two or three men are killed in the process, no penalty befalls the culprit: he has become a wolf. Watkins calls this phenomenon ‘wolf-marriage’ and compares it to parallel legal provisions in other Indo-European traditions.¹⁵³ In India, this type of marriage was called the *rākṣasa* rite and reserved for the members of the warrior (*kṣatriya*) caste, who were allowed to seize a girl as a bride. *The Laws of Manu* (the earliest work of Hindu legal literature) specify:

The forcible abduction of a maiden from her home, while she cries on and weeps, after (her kinsmen) have been slain or wounded and (their houses) broken open, is called the *rākṣasa* rite.¹⁵⁴

Along with the violent *rākṣasa* (lit. ‘demon’) rite, the *Laws of Manu* describe seven other types of Indian marriage. According to Dumézil, these can be compared to the three legal forms a *cum manu* marriage can take in Rome: *confarreatio*, *coemptio*, and *usus*.¹⁵⁵ The religious rite of *confarreatio* (sharing the sacrificial cake of spelt, in the presence of a *flamen Dialis*) was a condition for the priestly service of *flamines maiores*, and can thus be

¹⁵¹ Dench discusses the sources (2005: 11-25) and later the significance of the myths for the construction of Roman identity. However, the lack of any reference to their origins is a conspicuous omission.

¹⁵² Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1995: 658-60.

¹⁵³ If someone abducts a woman and helpers go after them, if 3 or 2 men die, there is no compensation; ‘you have become a wolf’. (Trans. Watkins 1970: 324).

¹⁵⁴ *Laws of Manu* (Mānava-Dharmaśāstra) 3.33. Trans. Bühler (in Watkins 1970: 324).

¹⁵⁵ *Cum manu* marriage is one in which a woman passes under the *potestas* of her husband. In a *sine manu* marriage she remains under the *potestas* of her family’s *pater familias*. For the three forms of *cum manu* marriage see Grubbs 2002: 21-3.

compared to the four rites reserved for the priestly (*brahmin*) class of India. *Coemptio* as a sales transaction is paralleled by *āsura*, marriage by purchase (most appropriate for *vaiśyas*, the third caste). This leaves us with the *usus*, in which marriage was recognised as legal simply through long standing cohabitation.¹⁵⁶ This legal curiosity finds an Indian parallel in the *gandharva* rite (union by mutual desire), which was appropriate only for members of the *kṣatriya* caste, just like the *rākṣasa* rite. According to Dumézil, both the latter forms of marriage reflect the autonomous nature of the warrior class, the second in his trifunctional structure.¹⁵⁷ The warriors were free from the bonds of ritual marriage and allowed a legal union by a simple act of one's own will or forceful abduction. These legal provisions fit the picture (frequent in Indo-European mythology) of a willful warrior who goes his own way and possesses a force that can often be detrimental to society.¹⁵⁸

Although the *rākṣasa* rite is free from the ritualised aspects of its counterparts, it is bound by specific rules and requirements. Both the marriage by abduction and its requirements have been a productive source of narrative material in various Indo-European mythologies. In a groundbreaking article, Jamison argued that 'two great Indo-European epics, the Indian Rāmāyana and the Greek Iliad, are essentially stories about the repercussions of an illegal abduction'.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, her analysis of close correspondences between the *Teikhoskopia* episode of Iliad 3 and the rape of Draupadī in the *Mahābhārata* demonstrates the distinctive nature of the Indo-European abduction rite.¹⁶⁰ Aside from these very specific instances, Greek mythology abounds with many variations on the theme of rape.¹⁶¹ At the beginning of his *Histories*, Herodotus cites mythical accounts that trace the conflict of Greece and Persia to a series of reciprocal raids between Europe and Asia:

¹⁵⁶ In this case, the woman could avoid falling under the *manus* of her husband by absenting herself from his house for three nights in a row every year (*usurpatio trinocitii*).

¹⁵⁷ *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra* 3.20-35; Dumézil 1970a: 615 and 1979: 17-58; Puhvel 1987: 157-8.

¹⁵⁸ Classicists will remember the example of Achilles. Copious cross-cultural evidence has been studied by Dumézil in a number of works (e.g. 1970b).

¹⁵⁹ Jamison 1994: 9.

¹⁶⁰ At least on the Greco-Aryan level, for which see M.L. West 2007: 7-11.

¹⁶¹ Zeitlin 1989: 122-51.

the abduction of Io, Europa, Medea and Helen.¹⁶² This brings us back to the mythical abduction that stands at the beginning of Roman history, the rape of the Sabines.

This is a subject that Dumézil frequently discussed as one of his most solid arguments for the theory of the three functions.¹⁶³ Dumézil has drawn attention to the salient features of both sides in the war: Romulus and his army rely on divine origin and protection, as well as military prowess. The Sabines are not without these qualities, but they are differentiated by their wealth, which the Romans conspicuously lack.¹⁶⁴ In Ovid, the contrast is most clearly stated: *spernebant generos inopes vicinia dives*, while Livy's account of the Tarpeia episode revolves around the Sabines' gold and jewellery.¹⁶⁵ However, more important than this material aspect is the fact that Romans primarily lack women, and thus the union is to provide them with riches and fertility, which Dumézil identifies as the primary aspects of his third function.¹⁶⁶ The pattern of a war and subsequent union between the 'brave' and the 'godlike' on the one side and the 'wealthy' on the other is found at the beginning of mythologies of many other Indo-European peoples.¹⁶⁷ In Old Norse sources, the gods of the Aesir, led by the magician and sovereign Óðinn and his son Thorr (the giant-slayer and warrior) wage war with the gods of the Vanir who represent various aspects of fertility and wealth (Njörðr the Rich, his son Freyr and daughter Freya).¹⁶⁸ The undecided fortunes of war come to an end with a unification of the two groups of gods.¹⁶⁹ Similarly, in Indian mythology the twins called Aśvins, patrons of health and fertility (cognates with the Greek Dioscuri) are allowed to partake of the soma

¹⁶² *Hist.* 1.1-5.

¹⁶³ Dumézil 1944: 128-93; 1949: 125-42; 1970a: 60-76.

¹⁶⁴ Strabo (*Geo.* 5.3.1) cites Fabius Pictor saying that the Romans only knew wealth when they became masters of the Sabines.

¹⁶⁵ *F.* 3.189; Liv. 1.11. Dumézil also points to the *avitas opes* in Florus 1.1; on Tarpeia in specific see Dumézil 1947: 279-91.

¹⁶⁶ There are other elements that connect the abduction to fertility. It takes place at the Consualia, a festival of Consus, who is a deity of stored grain (derived from *condere*), closely associated with Ops (Consiva), a goddess of abundance. See Versnel (1993: 164-71) and also Woodard (2013: 211-3) who connects Consus to Tutulina, *tutela fructuum*.

¹⁶⁷ These are Dumézil's (1970a: 68) own shorthands for his three functions in this case.

¹⁶⁸ The name Vanir itself is related to Latin *venus*, Sk. *vanas* (lust). See Woodard: forthcoming.

¹⁶⁹ Dumézil (1947: 249-78) finds more specific correspondences between Livy's account and the narrative in the Scandinavian sources (*Ynglingasaga* 4, *Völuspá* 21-4).

offerings (and thus become gods proper) only after their conflict with Indra (the sovereign warrior god) is settled by the seer Cyavana.¹⁷⁰

Dumézil's account of these myths presents a good case for his trifunctional theory, an Indo-European ideology whose traces continued to linger in the mythologies of their descendants long after they had lost the social framework from which it sprang. However, the parallel Nordic and Indian myths do not present the rape of women as the main element in acquisition of fertility, a wide domain which Dumézil ascribes to the third function.¹⁷¹ True, each of the versions contains the element of interplay between a woman and riches: a witch named Gollveig ('gold-might') in Scandinavia, and in India, Sukanyā (Cyavana's wife), who is tempted with jewelry just like Tarpeia.¹⁷² The Aśvins' temptation of Sukanyā is followed by a proposal that she marry one of them instead of old Cyavana, but her refusal is respected and thus one can hardly speak of anything parallel to rape here (despite Dumézil).¹⁷³ Only in the Roman myth does the rape of women take centre stage as the fertility element in the story. Why this specific variation? Many years later Dumézil returned to the subject to suggest that the rape of the Sabines is a reflection of the Indo-European marriage by abduction (rākṣasa in India), transposed in legendary form.¹⁷⁴

The suggestion seems plausible, but we lack the overall parallel structure between the narratives that would make it secure. I propose that the wolf aspect of the Roman foundation myth is the key to this modification and to its overall structure. As argued above, the life of the twins in the wilderness bears the traits of an initiatory paradigm, from the nursing by the she-wolf through their savage lifestyle of hunting and cattle raiding to Romulus' founding of a new city, which is only complete with the incorporation of the

¹⁷⁰ *MBh* 3.123-5.

¹⁷¹ On which see Littleton (1986: 77) who provides a booklength anthropological evaluation of trifunctionality. See also Allen (2000: 39-60), who demonstrates that a type of primitive classification can be found in other 'non-literate tribals', and should thus be expected of the Proto-Indo-Europeans.

¹⁷² On Tarpeia, see n. 165 above.

¹⁷³ Dumézil 1947: 275.

¹⁷⁴ Dumézil 1979: 54, 73-6.

Sabines.¹⁷⁵ We have seen Ulf's abundant evidence for the crucial role of women in the culmination of male initiatory rites. The same applies to this initiatory narrative. The life *en marge* makes little sense unless it ends with reincorporation into society, which the Romans based on family, established in marriage. The liminal stage in the Roman foundation narrative does not end with the foundation of a city. The mythical complex involving Romulus' asylum and the rape of the Sabines is a logical continuation and finale of that narrative. The specific form that marriage takes here is modelled on the Indo-European *rākṣasa* rite, originally a privilege of the warrior caste that is committed by those said to be outlaws (wolves) like the men in Romulus' asylum.¹⁷⁶ This is supported by linguistic evidence: Watkins argues that the phrase Livy uses (*virginem rapere*) is a technical term for this ancient Indo-European rite.¹⁷⁷

The complementary relationship between men as wolves and the rape of women can also be seen in one of Ovid's aetiologies for the Lupercalia:¹⁷⁸ Romulus institutes the rite in order to solve the problem of female infertility that is said to affect the Sabine women. In chapter one, I have argued that the central feature of Ovid's *aetion* and the rape of the Sabines myth is fertility. The purpose of both is a creation of a healthy society through successful reproduction of offspring. From our current perspective, we can see that the Sabine women are not a mere empty filler in Ovid's account, a reference to a mythical past that justifies the ritual present. Ovid himself could hardly have been aware of this diachronic dimension, and the direct relation between the Luperci and the Sabine women in his account is probably derived from an older tradition as it recalls the wolf and women theme that we detect in the foundation narrative. The outcasts of Romulus' asylum and the Sabine women they take as wives are complementary components needed to form a complete society. Dumézil's comparative perspective confirms that conclusion as it reveals

¹⁷⁵ This seems a more persuasive account than that of Jannot (1992), who assigns the rape to possible Etruscan influence, inferred from depictions of Sileni in play with women (usually dancing) on early temples of central Italy.

¹⁷⁶ Similar to the Hittite abduction rite, which McCone (1987: 119) reads as committed by a warband.

¹⁷⁷ Liv. 1.9.10; Watkins 1970: 324.

¹⁷⁸ Analysed in chapter 1.1, pp. 19-28.

that cognate mythologies also required a unification of the sovereign/military and fertility aspect in order to achieve social totality.

The rape of the Sabines provides a logical conclusion to the foundation narrative, which is initiatory in nature and follows the traits of a wolf-initiation complex, as does its ritual counterpart, the Lupercalia. Here it might be useful to survey the narrative traits that point to that conclusion. At the outset, we have the animal symbol of Rome whose presence at the beginning of the twins' lives presaged how remarkable they would be. A comparative perspective may shed additional light on this. In his aforementioned reconstruction of the Indo-European myth of the first sacrifice, Lincoln has noticed that the Roman she-wolf occupies a distinctive position in relation to other traditions.¹⁷⁹ While most other traditions focus on the sacrifice of a cow/bull and human being called 'Twin', the animal of Roman mythology is a she-wolf. She is not sacrificed, but she takes part in saving the twins from death. The miraculous event is only the first part of the wolf-complex that will continue to manifest itself throughout their lives.¹⁸⁰ Bremmer has argued that the twins' pursuits in the wilderness reflect 'an Indo-European coming of age ritual'.¹⁸¹ In their pastoral life as adolescents, the twins enjoy hunting and cattle raiding, activities that require the initiates to assume the guise of a wolf, as the animal predator of initiation. With Romulus, the savage lifestyle of raiding continues into the founding of the city and formation of a community. When Vergil refers to this founding act of Romulus, he sums it up nicely: *inde lupae fulvo nutricis tegmine laetus*.¹⁸² In founding the city and rape of the Sabines, Romulus still bears the sign of the wolf.¹⁸³ In his analysis of cognate Indo-European wolf-initiation rituals, McCone points to the interesting ways the narratives fluctuate between animal and human forms:¹⁸⁴ while in some cases this is made explicit

¹⁷⁹ Lincoln 1975b: 138-9.

¹⁸⁰ Bremmer 1987a: 43.

¹⁸¹ 1987a: 33 (with a survey of previous scholarship).

¹⁸² *Aen.* 1.275. Romulus also wears a wolfcap at Prop. 4.10.20.

¹⁸³ In some ways, this aspect could be argued to continue throughout his reign by association with Celeres, the band of young impetuous men kept as his personal guard. See McCone 1987: 130-1; Dumézil 1988: 40-1, 50; p. 67 above.

¹⁸⁴ McCone 1987: 136-40.

through the initiates' physical transformation into wolves (for a certain time period),¹⁸⁵ in others their transformation is symbolic, but equally effective in their depictions (as outlaws) and actions (raiding, killing, trials of manhood, etc.).

Finally, we should also consider another aspect of raiding that was closely linked in ancient Indo-European traditions, but does not come naturally to modern sensibilities. McInerney sees the myths of cattle raids in the Greek world of the archaic period as a reflection of its fragmentary state and a justification for constant agonism. He adds that their complements are stories of bride rape and the two myths can act in unison, complementing or substituting for each other.¹⁸⁶ This connection ultimately comes from a patriarchal worldview that perceives women as a commodity in social relations. This is confirmed by other Indo-European traditions. In her discussion of the Indian evidence, Arabagian notes that 'woman can take the place of a cow without changing the basic story'.¹⁸⁷ She suggests that the connection might have to do with the fact that cattle usually constitute bride price and dowry. In his reconstruction of the Indo-European cattle-raiding myth, Lincoln finds that two close traditions, the Iranian and Indian, differ to some extent: while the cattle is the prized booty in the Indian version, in the Iranian the hero Thraētaona recovers two women who had been previously abducted.¹⁸⁸ It is hardly surprising for male warrior outlaws to practise cattle raiding and bride stealing side by side.¹⁸⁹ Both actions reflect the needs of a pastoral economy. More importantly, both are appropriate activities for an initiation group of outlaws living on the fringes of society.

3.1.7 The wandering youth

The practice of gathering criminals, slaves and outcasts makes the asylum a place of

¹⁸⁵ One such case is that of Sigmund and Sinfjötli in the ON *Völsungasaga* (n. 65 above). Classicists will be more familiar with the Arcadian story of Pan Lycaeus (p. 85).

¹⁸⁶ McInerney 2010: 112, see also Walcot 1979: 328-9.

¹⁸⁷ Arabagian 1984: 110, discussion at 109-12.

¹⁸⁸ Lincoln 1976: 52-3, 1981: 108.

¹⁸⁹ Early Germanic evidence on *warg* (outlaw) seems to support this conclusion as well. See Sidonius Apollinaris letter to Lupus of Troyes, *Loeb* 2.258.

liminality. As Bremmer remarks, the asylum is a Greek word and institution, and thus most probably a ‘later rationalisation of the unexplainable contribution by criminals to Rome's foundation’.¹⁹⁰ The myth itself comes from an older tradition and is paralleled by the myths of other Italic peoples. An interesting case is the origin myth of Brutti in the South of Italy. Justin (in his epitome of Trogus) reports that the neighbouring Lucani would send their sons to the shepherds in the forest who would make them practice activities we can identify as related to youth initiation (hunting, cattle raids, etc.).¹⁹¹ In time, these were joined by an indistinct mixture of others, including runaway slaves and founded their own tribe, the Brutti.

Other Italic peoples shared this practice, which Festus says was a result of a religious vow called the Sacred Spring (*ver sacrum*). Dionysius of Halicarnassus also tells of the migration of Italic peoples as a result of a vow to sacrifice every living creature born in a particular year: the animals are duly sacrificed, but human children are consecrated to a god and when they reach manhood sent out into foreign lands.¹⁹² The consecration of youth, which was coupled with the other offerings, was apparently irreversible, and as Versnel points out, the *consecrati* were outcasts, ritually expelled from their own community to found a new one. The deity in question was regularly Mars, which explains the names of many migrating tribes: Mamertini, Picentes, Hirpini, Lucani.¹⁹³ These are either derived from his ancient name (Mamers) or that of his totemic animals (*lupus*, *hirpus*, *picus*).¹⁹⁴ Mars, wolves, young men and outcasts: we are at the core of the myth of Romulus’ asylum. The *Suodales* of ‘Poplios Valesios’ who made a dedication to Mars on the Satricum inscription (dated to about 500BC) were very probably a similar warband type

¹⁹⁰ Bremmer 1987a: 38.

¹⁹¹ Justin 23.1.4; Napoli (1966: 61-83) presents a good analysis of the sources. See also Alföldi 1974: 129-31.

¹⁹² 1.23-4; Strabo 5.4, F 150L, s.v. Mamertini; Paul. *Fest.* 519L, s.v. *ver sacrum*. On the only historically confirmed instance in Rome see Liv. 22.10; Heurgon 1957: 36-51; J.H. Clark 2014: 405-22.

¹⁹³ The Samnite youths were also consecrated to Mars, but led by a bull (Heurgon 1957: 5-7). See also Versnel (1985/86: 140-1, 147-8), who makes a strong case for Mars as an initiation god. Caro Roldán (2000: 159-90) offers an exhaustive list of bibliography and argues against the purely economic interpretation (for demographic reasons) of *ver sacrum*.

¹⁹⁴ This suggests a possible connection between the tribe of Hirpini and the *hirpi Sorani* (see Rissanen 2012: 123-4).

of *sodalitas*.¹⁹⁵

As Bremmer argues, what emerges from the story of Romulus' asylum, descriptions of *sodalitas* in Livy and the origin myths of Italic peoples is primarily the element of youth:¹⁹⁶ young men on the verge of manhood set up a community of their own to which they attract other liminal groups, such as slaves and outcasts. Such temporary youth associations may end up being incorporated into society, but they also may acquire a permanent character as a warrior retinue gathered around a noble leader who takes them on raids and expeditions.¹⁹⁷ The presence of a warband in the centre of a foundation myth (Sacred spring, Romulus' asylum) reflects the former condition. The message it sends is ambivalent: it suffuses the beginnings of a people with divine sanction, but it also marks them with the disgrace of descent from lowly origin.¹⁹⁸ As Dench rightly contends, it is most unlikely that such myths are later antiquarian inventions.¹⁹⁹ It has often been argued that the myth owes a great part of its specificity to an Indo-European tradition of an initiatory warband.

Aggressive military invasions were once regarded as the main reason for the widespread expansion of the Indo-Europeans. In time, they have been replaced with more modest models such as migrations and small-scale intrusions, followed by the newcomers' mingling and mixing with the native population.²⁰⁰ Without going into the details of the debate, I can point to the rare instance of recent French and British classicists' agreement on an Indo-European subject in the form of West's and Sergent's support of the role of the warbands in Indo-European expansion.²⁰¹ Historical examples indicate they most likely played a significant role in the spread of Indo-European languages. An obvious example is

¹⁹⁵ Although not necessarily involved in a *ver sacrum*. See Versnel 1980: 97-150.

¹⁹⁶ Bremmer (1982: 133-47) mostly accepts and slightly modifies Versnel's conclusions.

¹⁹⁷ Cornell (2003: 88-91) agrees with this assessment and adds Coriolanus (and his warrior retinue) to the count while arguing for a picture of archaic Italy full of such warbands. This seems to be an overstatement and I cannot understand his off-hand comparison with 'Afghanistan or Somalia' (at p.83)! A different angle on Coriolanus as a warband leader McCone 1987: 117-8.

¹⁹⁸ We need only remember how Dionysius left out the inconvenient slaves from his account of the asylum. See n. 149 above and Gabba 1991: 103, 197.

¹⁹⁹ Dench 1995: 205-6, full discussion: 1995: 185-212.

²⁰⁰ Mallory 1989: 257-65.

²⁰¹ M.L. West 2007: 447; Sergent 2003: 9-27.

that of Germanic warriors and their relatively quick spread through ‘barbarian invasions’. However, we should be wary of characterising every migration as a form of warband excursion. Our classical sources inform us of Germanic warbands developing in a style similar to that of ancient Italy. Caesar and Tacitus tell of young warriors, often gathered from a large area, and led by a single leader in pursuit of plunder and glory.²⁰² The practice continued into Medieval times for we find it with the berserkers.²⁰³ The origin myths of some Germanic peoples closely resemble the Roman foundation myth: the Lombards were wolf or dog people, leaving their tribe and kinsmen as young men to found a new community while the Alemanni (all men) originated as an indistinct rabble of all sorts.²⁰⁴

Much earlier than Germanic, Celtic invasions affected ancient Europe and Celtic tribes settled large areas, from Asia Minor (Galatia) and Greece in the east to Spain and Ireland in the west. Again, Roman testimonies indicate this was sometimes the result of expeditions largely formed by outcasts.²⁰⁵ McCone’s extensive research shows that the Celtic warband (*fíán* or *díberg*) shared the characteristics of their Germanic counterparts: from youth, warrior frenzy, raids, and nudity down to such details as wolf identification and wearing votive rings.²⁰⁶ Even the classical sources’ use of the name ‘Galli’ (as opposed to the native Celta) is a result of Greek and Roman encounters with these warrior bands: it is derived from Celtic **galā*, meaning martial fury/valour, which characterised them.²⁰⁷

Some aspects of Greek colonisation of the Mediterranean can be explained in a similar fashion. For instance, Tarentum was said to have been founded by young men who were refused Spartan citizenship and sent overseas.²⁰⁸ In India, the Mahābhārata describes

²⁰² *BG* 6.23.6-9; Tac. *Germ.* 6-7, 13-14.

²⁰³ See McCone 1987: 101-4 and Kershaw 2000: 41-58 with references.

²⁰⁴ The main source for the history of the Lombards is Paulus Diaconus’ (better known for his epitome of Festus) *Historia Langobardorum*, at 1.11. See Kershaw 2000: 151-7 and Speidel 2002: 18-20.

²⁰⁵ Polybius 2.7, Livy 5.34.3.

²⁰⁶ McCone 1987: 104-10, Polybius 2.28-30, Caesar (*BG* 5.14) and Diodorus Siculus 5.29.1-2 convey some of the Roman impressions of Celtic warbands, particularly noted for their nudity.

²⁰⁷ The frenzied young warrior would then be termed **galatis*, equivalent of the Germanic berserker (McCone 2008: 4-8).

²⁰⁸ Sergent 2003: 10 (with references). See also Dowden 1992: 115-7. On ‘wolf-foundations’ in Cyprus and Trebizond see Katonis’ 2010: 1-22 (if slightly confused) hypothesis.

how king Yayati banished his sons who became the progenitors of new nations.²⁰⁹ As Speidel observes, migration myths involving youngsters are not limited to the Indo-European world.²¹⁰ However, we can observe more specific elements such as the number fifty (and its multipliers), which crops up persistently in numerous contexts of youth initiation in IE traditions. The Lucani sent out fifty young men into the wilderness, and this was the number of youths who founded Tarentum; there were fifty Argonaut rowers, as well as fifty sons of Aegyptus and fifty of their counterparts, the Danaids.²¹¹ In Ireland, the number of impetuous youths who bravely fight with CuChulain when all the other warriors are disabled by a curse is also fifty. The Luperci traditionally came from the *gens Fabia*, which preserved an ancient memory about three hundred of their members being slaughtered by the Etruscans in an attempt to raid their cattle.²¹² The other Luperci *gens*, either *Quintia* or *Quintilia*²¹³ (both derived from *quinque*) may also reflect the importance of the number fifty in Indo-European warbands. In a later stage of his life, Viśvāmitra (whom we met as a raiding warrior comparable to Remus, above) decides to adopt a son called Śunaḥśepa (lit. ‘Dog-Penis’) as the eldest of his 101 sons. As is wont to happen, his decision is not universally approved. Fifty of his sons accept their new brother, but the other fifty refuse, are cursed by Viśvāmitra and banished. The outlaws thus become progenitors of most of the Dāsyu (non-Aryan, outcast) races.²¹⁴ Thus, youth initiation in the Indo-European world was often coupled with wandering and the acquisition of new territory. In such exploits, the young men of the warband were joined by others of liminal status (slaves, outcasts, etc.) and sometimes formed a new society by intermingling with the local inhabitants.

²⁰⁹ *MBh* 1.85.3533; Sargent 2003: 11.

²¹⁰ Speidel 2002: 20.

²¹¹ More examples in Dowden 1992: 116 and Walcot 1979: 332.

²¹² See C.J. Smith 2006: 290-8 for discussion and references; also p. 259 below. Most accounts set the number at 306, which could imply six groups of fifty, each with a leader.

²¹³ See p. 55.

²¹⁴ See White 1991: 80-3, 248-9 (with references); Collins 2014: 126-32.

3.1.8 The Vrātyas

Particularly relevant in this context are the Vedic Vrātyas, outcast groups of wandering warriors. *The Laws of Manu* present the Vrātyas as progenitors of many non-Aryan races.²¹⁵ It has often been argued that this in Indian terms relatively late text (1st c. AD) simply ascribes low (outcast) origin to devalued peoples, in a typical process of conflation between two categories of negative Otherness, as modern theory would have it.²¹⁶ It should be clear by now that this is unlikely to be the case. Earlier evidence shows that the Vrātyas fit the pattern of an Indo-European warband. Although the subject has been frequently discussed in this context, many issues remain to be solved and further clarification may only come from a detailed study of the Sanskrit sources.²¹⁷ As a non-specialist, I shall mostly rely on the conclusions of philologists and Indologists who have studied the subject extensively. The current consensus is that the Vrātyas present an Indian manifestation of the Indo-European warband. They are young men who form groups (*vrātya* from *vrāta*—host, troop) to go on raiding expeditions and perform curious rituals in the wilderness. The members are not married and have not yet achieved full adult status, which involves the possession of land. In cases where males were not able to achieve the status of a householder (*gṛhastha*), they could remain Vrātyas permanently.²¹⁸ These were frequently young men left out of the inheritance when it was taken over by their elder brothers.²¹⁹ We find a very similar situation with the Celtic *fián*, which was joined by men who were unable to obtain land or property by the age of marriage.²²⁰

According to Witzel, the men were exchanged between the Kuru and the Pañcāla, the two main tribes of Northwestern India (the heartland of Vedic civilisation), a situation

²¹⁵ 10.21-3. Although the word did considerably change its meaning over time (Samuel 2008: 115-6).

²¹⁶ A pithy example from Jim Jarmusch's *Ghost Dog*: 'Yeah, Indians, niggers-same thing'. Discussion of 'negative Otherness' in Petković and Vuković 2011.

²¹⁷ The completion of Tristan Elby's Oxford thesis on the Vrātyas (in comparative religion) is eagerly awaited.

²¹⁸ On age groups in early Vedic texts see Witzel and Jamison 1992: 47.

²¹⁹ Falk 1986: 14, 51-2; Samuel 2008: 115-7, 183-4. Thus, the *Pañcavimśa Brāhmaṇa* (17.4.1) distinguishes between old and young vrātyas, bluntly describing the former as 'those who have their penis bent downwards'.

²²⁰ McCone 1987: 106-8.

reminiscent of our reports on the Bretii and the Lucani.²²¹ However, it seems that the Vrātyas also made incursions into unconquered territory. This would naturally follow from their wanderings and cattle raids, and one may also glean this from circumstantial evidence. One of the foremost authorities on Vedic sacrifice, Heesterman has indentified a later ritual, *yātsattra* as a descendant of *vrātya* rites. Moving the sacrificial fire along a river to the east every day, the participants are said to reach heaven in the end.²²² They progress while cursing and killing (like the Vrātyas) and thus occupy new space by domesticating it with sacrificial fire.²²³

In the most comprehensive modern study of the Vrātyas, Falk discusses a whole range of traits that bring out their outsider status. The Vrātya leader (*gr̥hapati*) wore black clothes and a black turban, which should be interpreted as symbolising his liminal state.²²⁴ His followers wore red clothes and either sheepskins or goatskins, according to different sources. The presence of goat-hides (*ajināni*) is in any case better attested, and Falk connects this to the Luperci and other warband groups.²²⁵ As we have seen above, the hides are an essential part of the warband's savage appearance as the predatory and the domestic aspect of animality are often combined.²²⁶ In addition, they wore a kind of cord, which Falk interprets as an ornamental belt.²²⁷ The fact that they wore two of these most likely symbolises their double vow, both to the leader and to the savage god Rudra, while the leader (*gr̥hapati*) wears one as he is consecrated only to Rudra.²²⁸ Of course, the presence of a belt and goatskin alone does not necessarily indicate that the Vrātyas share a common origin with the Luperci. Such implements are also attested in the carnival processions of

²²¹ Witzel 1995: 17-8.

²²² Notably, 'the Maruts also performed the Sarasvati yātsattras when going to heaven' (Heesterman 1962: 35)

²²³ See Woodard 2006: 147-9, 237-8, 242. On the role of fire in domesticating the wild see Heesterman 1993: 29-33.

²²⁴ Falk 1986: 19-20, one need only remember Vidal Naquet's famous 'Chasseur Noir' (1986).

²²⁵ Falk 1986: 20-1; *PB* 17.1.14-15; *LŚS* 8.6.15, 20, 25. Falk (2002: 33-5) discusses the antithesis between the leader and his followers.

²²⁶ Most explicitly in the case of a Hittite boy dressed in goatskin, and howling like a wolf (Kershaw 2000: 150).

²²⁷ Falk 1986: 21-2.

²²⁸ Falk 1986: 23.

modern Europe, as extensively documented by Höfler and Dumézil.²²⁹

The status of Vrātyas fluctuates in terms of caste and cosmology: they are said to be between heaven and earth, having not yet reached heaven as the desired object of sacrifice. As to social status, Heesterman says they precede both the specialised roles of classical Vedic sacrifice and the Indian caste system.²³⁰

Under these circumstances the proper conclusion seems to be that the vrātyas are actually ‘betwixt and between’; they are neither brahmin nor vaiśya, neither brahmin nor kṣatriya.

The Vrātyas use obscene language in ritual and eat food which is not to be eaten by brahmins.²³¹ Furthermore, they indulge in aggressive acts and are said to attack the brahmin and the householder. As raiders, they are thieves, under the protection of Rudra, the divine patron of savagery.²³²

The timing of the Vrātya festivals also reinforces this image. They take place in the liminal period of the year, just after the winter solstice in the cold season of Śísira, which corresponds to January-February in the Roman calendar.²³³ The most characteristic of the Vrātya rites was called the Vrātyastoma, performed to gather the Vrātyas as a group and facilitate their unity before setting out on a raiding expedition. In other words, it was a ritual of initiation. *Lātyāyana Śrauta Sutra* (8.6.2) explicitly says: *ye ke ca vrātyāḥ sampādayeyus, te prathamena (vrātyastomena) yajeran* (Any vrātyas who want to join in a group, should perform the first vrātyastoma).²³⁴ These rituals involved verse recitations (Sk. *stoma*—hymn, praise) combined with sacrifice.

As with the Luperci, we may notice that the Vrātyas’ mode of sacrifice differs from the standard, in this case classical Vedic, ritual. They are said to ‘snatch away’ goats and cook their meat. Heesterman observes:²³⁵

²²⁹ Dumézil 1929: 3-53; Höfler 1934: 26, 64.

²³⁰ Heesterman 1962: 8.

²³¹ Heesterman 1962: 9-10.

²³² Heesterman 1962: 11; Falk 1986: 29.

²³³ Falk 1986: 28.

²³⁴ Heesterman 1962: 4. A few sources mention it can be performed at an end of an expedition to reintegrate the Vrātyas into society (Heesterman 1962: 5-7).

²³⁵ *BŚS*. 18.24: 372.4; Heesterman 1962: 31. The same Indo-European verb is most likely behind the name Πρoμηθεύς (the ‘snatcher’ of fire). See M.L. West 2007: 273.

the use of the verb pra-math ‘to snatch away’ suggests comparison with wolves snatching away goats and sheep and rending them, for which the same verb or its simplex is used.

He adds that the Naimiṣīya raiders (widely identified as the Vrātyas) might have torn or severed the head of the animal. The Sanskrit verb here used is *vi-cchid* (cut asunder, tear). This is not only an expression of savagery, but in line with the idea of imitating the behaviour of a wolf. I have tried to argue that the knife of the Luperci may also be compared to the jaw of a wolf which slits the throat of his victim and lets it bleed.²³⁶

Equally interesting is the Vedic descendant of vrātya rites, the *sattra*. In classical Vedic ritual *sattra* is a type of soma sacrifice, which involves men uniting under a single leader to perform a series of rituals over twelve days or more. Soma, the intoxicating beverage of Vedic religion, has a central role in these rites.²³⁷ However, as Vedic specialists have repeatedly observed, what makes *sattra* special is not the long number of soma days, but particularly archaic features, which connect them with vrātya rites.²³⁸ Falk has argued that both vrātya rites and the *sattras* have devolved from Indo-European warband rituals. Sanskrit *sattra* means a session, sitting. A group of men gather in the wilderness to offer a *sattra* mainly for the purpose of obtaining cattle. This takes place in secret and the performers (*sattrins*) are said to creep up to a *sattra*, which is hence also called *prasarpaṇa*.²³⁹ Like the vrātya rites, the *sattra* takes place in the cold season of Śísira when the cattle are thin and skinny and the *sattrins* themselves are poor and pressed by hunger.²⁴⁰ They unite under a single leader (called *gṛhapati*, as in the Vrātya rites), who is said to offer himself in the sacrifice. It is hence forbidden to eat food from *sattrins*, for that is equivalent to eating the corpse of the sacrificer, who equates himself with the victim. The frequently repeated injunctions against cannibalism are tied with stressing the state of the *gṛhapati*, who is said to represent a dead man here and also as Vrātya leader. His death is

²³⁶ On the bloodrite, see pp. 189-90 above.

²³⁷ Falk 1986: 32, Heesterman 1993: 177.

²³⁸ Heesterman 1993: 178-9.

²³⁹ Falk 1986: 33-4. The root is *sṛp*, IE cognates: L. *serpo*, Gk. *ἔρπω*.

²⁴⁰ Falk 1986: 34. This is a period that precedes the beginning of the year proper, which in India (as in many other cultures) naturally came with the spring (Heesterman 1957: 7).

symbolic rather than literal, which is typical of initiation rites. Again, the above interpretation of the bloodrite in the Lupercalia comes to mind.²⁴¹

Falk concludes that the Vedic *sattra* and the Vrātya rituals share the same origin, in the warband rituals of the twelve day transitional period of the year, the typical duration of a *sattra*.²⁴² The *Śatapatha Brahmana* contrasts the sitting of the *sattra* with the consequent movement of the *sattrins*, lead by their leader.²⁴³ This was a raiding expedition. *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* says that a year following a successful *sattra* will be marked by hunger, for the *sattrins* will take the people's food and means of sustenance.²⁴⁴ As we shall see in the last chapter, conflict and agonism are prominent features of the Vrātya way of life. We also observe them in the transitional period of the year, at the Mahāvratā, a festival of great antiquity.

3.1.9 Mahāvratā

The Mahāvratā festival is the penultimate day of a long string of soma days that consist of numerous ritual actions. However, as opposed to the soma offerings and other standard rites, the middle of this day is taken up by a series of very archaic and unusual rituals, the kind of which Heesterman identified as preceding classical Vedic ritual. The Vrātyas are said to have instituted these rites,²⁴⁵ and many chaotic elements are reminiscent of the savage brotherhood such as the figures of the praiser and the reviler that engage in a agonistic dialogue²⁴⁶ and the ritual copulation between a man and a prostitute (*pumścalī*). The victim here also includes a goat offered to Prajāpati, and a bull offered to Indra. Prajāpati is said to symbolise the year and the 25 hymn (*stoma*) divisions reflect the divisions of the year.²⁴⁷ Along with such unusual elements as dancing, drumming, and playing instruments known to us only by name, the day saw a chariot race and the swaying

²⁴¹ Falk 1986: 36-42.

²⁴² Falk 1986: 30-1.

²⁴³ *ŚB* 4.6.8.1-3.

²⁴⁴ *TS* 7.5.9.1-2, Heesterman 1993: 176, Falk 1986: 43.

²⁴⁵ Kershaw 2000: 35; Heesterman 1962: 10, n. 27.

²⁴⁶ Heesterman 1962: 22-4.

²⁴⁷ *ŚA* 1.1.

of a swing which represents the sun. Heesterman concludes: 'we have here the remnants of a rowdy and orgiastic New Year festival'.²⁴⁸ Keith was already close to this interpretation when he explained it as a solstice festival, emphasising sun imagery, and rituals that represent it such as the motion of the swing and a mock fight between an Arya and a Śūdra (outsider, outcaste) over a round bull hide.²⁴⁹ Gonda also sees in it the beginning of a new year, adducing worldwide parallels for its fertility elements.²⁵⁰

The beginning of the year was equated to a new cosmological cycle, representing the renewal of the world, and the rites were to foreshadow the abundance of spring through acts of fertility. Hence women, who are rarely given a role in the patriarchal Vedic society, take a conspicuous role in this ritual. Married women sing a song in order to be given more children.²⁵¹ They also dance around the fire with water pitchers which they empty, and strike their laps while praying for an abundance of cows and milk.²⁵² Such fertility rites, akin to those we have observed in the Lupercalia, the timing of the Mahāvratā, as well as its subversion of norms through ritual contests and obscenities all clearly indicate a festival of reversal. Many of these elements can be connected internally to the Vrātyas and other important Indian festivals, most of which descend from an ancient Indo-European tradition.

A very ancient part of the Mahāvratā celebration is the chariot, and this is one of the few Vedic rituals which involves a complete chariot.²⁵³ It is mounted by the king or a distinguished archer who then has to shoot three arrows into a piece of animal skin hanging between two posts. The archer's dexterity is of essence as the arrows had to remain fixed in this 'dry skin'. As Keith observed, this is reminiscent of the Rājasūya ritual of royal consecration where the king had to shoot three arrows at close members of his family to

²⁴⁸ Heesterman 1993: 55.

²⁴⁹ Keith 1908: 73-85 presents a useful analysis of the sources, and rarely errs in overstressing the sun imagery and 'fertility magic', which is surprising given their popularity at the time. On the swing and the sun see M.L. West 2007: 213-4.

²⁵⁰ Gonda 1961: 78-102. See also Jamison 1991: 278.

²⁵¹ Gonda 1961: 78.

²⁵² Keith (1908: 80) finds this reminiscent of the Lupercalia and the Thesmophoria.

²⁵³ In most other rituals the chariot was separated into 'disiecta membra', as Heesterman puts it 1993: 64-5. The chariot also survived complete in the royal rituals of *vayapeya* and *rāyasūya* (pp. 270-3).

assert his superiority.²⁵⁴ The vrātya leader, *grhapati* is also equipped with an unstrung bow and quiver with three arrows.²⁵⁵ A similar agonistic element is the ritual contest over a bull hide, which reasserts the power of the Arya culture over outsiders in the dejected figure of Śūdra. The Śūdra had to revile, and his enemy the Arya, praise ritual activities, which were thus said to be purified.²⁵⁶

Another competitive feature of the festival comes in the form of an obscene dialogue between a prostitute and a *brahmacārin*, said to derive from the foreign land of Magadha. The prostitute abuses the young *brahmacārin*, who is an initiate Brahmin in the liminal stage, usually in his adolescence, and thus bound by a strict vow of chastity and an obligation to learn the sacred Vedas by heart. She reproaches him for breaking his vows and he in turn calls her offensive names, and finally a harlot who washes off the male member. They are then said to engage in sexual intercourse.²⁵⁷ Gonda goes into a long discussion on the significance of this openly obscene rite, which clearly reinforces the fertility aspect of the festival.²⁵⁸ This is a unique time when the chaste brahmin student breaks his vows by having intercourse with a prostitute, which thus dissolves the social order through the chaos of reversal.

We have seen that the Vrātyas also engage in obscene dialogues. Moreover, The only other place where a brahmin and a prostitute are mentioned together is with the Vrātyas and in the long list of offerings of the human sacrifice.²⁵⁹ This unlikely pair makes an essential component of the duality that otherwise marks the Vrātya brotherhood, and which is also clearly discernible in the antithesis between the members and their leader. For example, the *Lāṭyāyana Śrauta Sutra* specifies that the Vrātyas should give their apparel and their cows (33 each)²⁶⁰ to the brahmin from Magadha. Consequently, the

²⁵⁴ Keith 1908: VIII-IX, 82-3 with references.

²⁵⁵ Falk 1986: 26-7.

²⁵⁶ *PB* 5.5.13; Gonda 1961: 79-80; Heesterman 1985: 222, n. 24.

²⁵⁷ *JB* 2.404; *DŚS* 11.3.9; *AŚS* 21.19.5-7; Keith 1908: 79-80; Gonda 1961: 80.

²⁵⁸ Gonda 1961: 82-98.

²⁵⁹ Parpola 1983: 48.

²⁶⁰ The number is symbolic and refers to the number of gods that *RV* 3.6.9 mentions (Parpola 1983: 51).

brahmin should share food with the Vrātyas.²⁶¹ This feature is very unusual as the pure brahmins otherwise stand in contrast to the impure Vrātyas.²⁶² It would thus be as astonishing to the Indians as the presence of the flamen at the Lupercalia is to us. The flamen is undoubtedly of the same origin as the brahmin. We shall explore this ancient Indo-European priesthood and its relationship to the Lupercalia when we return to the Vrātyas in the last chapter of this section.

As we can see, several elements of the Mahāvratā find close parallels in Vrātya apparel and rituals, which warrants the note that this festival was founded by the savage brotherhood. The agonistic festival also includes a hymn to the Maruts, who ‘rush with gleaming lances’.²⁶³ This is unsurprising as these bellicose gods rush through the atmosphere led by the warrior god Indra. The Maruts are a warrior troop of Indra’s and they have been seen as the divine representation of the Indo-European warband at least since Wikander.²⁶⁴ They are closely associated with the Vrātyas. According to *Baudhyāyana Śrauta Sutra*: ‘the vrātya (-leader) is Indra-like, the group is Marut-like, he (Indra) unites them in a group’.²⁶⁵ In other places, the Maruts are the mythical counterparts and divine representatives of the vrātyas. They perform a vrātyastoma sacrifice, and they help the stranded Vrātyas when they are unable to reach heaven. The Vrātyas of the Kuru tribe openly identify themselves with the Maruts.²⁶⁶

McCone has detected this cooperative relationship in many Indo-European traditions: two warrior gods, one of war proper and the other a representative of the youthful warband, who consequently also appears in the plural. However, McCone mistakenly sought to find this relationship in Rome between Mars and Quirinus. After rightly observing that both the Roman foundation myth and the Lupercalia rituals share

²⁶¹ *LŚS* 8.6.26-30.

²⁶² It is unclear what the expression *brahmabandhu* actually stands for. It has been suggested this could mean ‘nominal Brahmin’ or one acting as Brahmin. In this case they would have a sacred function to act out in the ritual (Gonda 1961: 88-9). If this is the case, one could compare it to the role of actors in the Lupercalia of late antiquity.

²⁶³ *RV* 5.55.1, *ŚA* 1.2.18, Keith 1908: 15.

²⁶⁴ Wikander 1938: 72-5.

²⁶⁵ *BŚS*. 18. 24:371.6, according to Heesterman 1962: 7.

²⁶⁶ Heesterman 1962: 17.

the elements of an Indo-European warband initiation, McCone is sidetracked into a long critique of Dumézil's trifunctional theory, which takes him to Quirinus. He cites cases where Quirinus is associated with war, but this takes him to the unwarranted conclusion that this divinity embodied the youthful warband in Rome (*qua* Romulus Quirinus) especially because the *Salii Collini* were under his protection.²⁶⁷ An eminent Celticist and a linguist, McCone is here clearly outside his scope of expertise and makes of Quirinus and the *Salii* more than the Roman evidence can support. Although the *Salii* were an ancient brotherhood that might fit the pattern of warrior initiation,²⁶⁸ they do not fit McCone's own criteria of an age group, and (unlike the *Luperci*) they have nothing to do with wolves, outlaws and cattle raids. The comparison between the *Salii* and the Indian *Maruts* relies only on their shared portrayal as warrior dancers and is thus much less convincing than a number of parallels one can adduce between the *Faunus/Luperci* and the *Maruts*, and their father *Rudra*. We shall explore these connections in the next chapter.

We may conclude this long chapter by coming back to its central theme, the typology of initiation rituals. We have seen that Ulf's book and modern ethnographic studies support the notion that the *Lupercalia* is an initiation ritual. Male initiation groups identify themselves with a predator, and the dominant predator in the Indo-European world is the wolf. The Indo-European model of wolf initiation enables us to understand many traits of the ritual and mythology of the *Lupercalia*, particularly the bloodrite and cattle raids. The model also accounts for an important aspect of the Roman foundation myth, from its iconic she-wolf to the rape of the *Sabines*. Foundation myths of other Italic peoples (*ver sacrum*) seem to reflect the same model, as new beginnings meet in a natural dialogue between initiation and foundation myths, as Eliade pointed out.²⁶⁹ However, migrations of youngsters under the aegis of a wolf are not restricted to the Indo-European world, although most of our evidence comes from Indo-European speaking peoples. This complicates the matter of common heritage, as lack of specific comparanda may indicate

²⁶⁷ McCone 1987: 127-34.

²⁶⁸ Torelli 1990: 93-106; Köves-Zulauf (1990: 264-9) compares the *Salii* and *Luperci*.

²⁶⁹ Eliade 1973: 59.

some of the initiation material independently sprang in various areas.²⁷⁰ The examination of the Vrātya complex has been an attempt to overcome this problem, and provided a number of interesting parallels. However, many similarities between them and the Luperci may also be explained in terms of typology. It remains to be seen if the god of the Luperci and the divinity of the vrātyas share more specific parallels that would more convincingly indicate common heritage.

²⁷⁰ Versnel (1976: 391-401) already pointed out this problem when surveying existing bibliography on the warband.

3.2. In Defence of Lost Causes

‘*origin* is not to be identified with *meaning*.’¹

3.2.1 Indo-European Comparativism

Slavoj Žižek, arguably the most influential philosopher of our times, begins one of his books by turning a classical proverb around: *causa locuta, Roma finita*.² Žižek applies his pun to the reception of psychoanalysis (and issues of global politics), but does it not nicely encapsulate the fear at the heart of a classicist who opposes comparative mythology? If the Indo-European causes of some of Roman mythology/history and ritual are revealed, what space does that leave for Rome’s own contribution? If we can really reveal the origin of the Lupercalia, does that imply that we have also untangled its meaning? Equipped with the tools of this grand comparative theory, can we not simply discard tiresome details (textual problems, scanty sources, political issues, etc.)? In other words, *causa locuta, Roma finita*?³

In Defence of Lost Causes, the title of Žižek's book, is a phrase usually taken up by those who wish to undertake a Quixotic endeavour, if not a Sisyphean task. Although advocating comparative mythology in Classics might seem like such a task, I wish to give this phrase another meaning in the methodology of this work. Comparative mythology is essentially a discipline concerned with uncovering lost causes, the traces of an underlying tradition that cause the appearance of a particular myth or rite in various branches of the Indo-European family. It is by no means a ‘grand theory’ which would aim to explain away a particular phenomenon by presenting its origin as a key to unlock all of its complexity. Comparative mythology

¹ Versnel 1993: 242.

² Žižek 2008: 1.

³ In a slightly sardonic way, Redfield (1991) points to an important reason why the status of classics as a traditionally privileged discipline in Western tradition may add to seeing comparativism as a threat: ‘Comparative work may be seen as threatening to this privileged status; it implies that the Greeks and Romans are no different from savages and barbarians (although, of course, the differences may be the very thing that interests the comparativist).’

does not claim to be able to explain every aspect of a particular phenomenon, let alone the entirety of a culture based on an Indo-European language. ‘Indo-European cultural comparativism’, as Allen calls it,⁴ specifically deals with the traditions of the Indo-European languages and it cannot aim to explain all the numerous cultural phenomena that appear recorded in this language family (the largest in the world), which comprises more than three billion living speakers. Comparativism deals with only a small fraction of this linguistic wealth, and predominantly concerns ancient traditions, on the presumption that the earliest attested languages are closer to the Indo-European mother tongue than modern languages.⁵ Thus, for example Old English preserves more traits of Proto-Indo-European than modern English, e.g. in inflexion (it has five cases, regular ablaut inflexion, etc). Hittite, Latin, Greek and Sanskrit are closer to the Proto-Indo-European mother tongue than Italian or Hindi (their descendants) for example. Historical linguistics compares these languages in order to arrive at the regularities (laws) that govern changes they underwent through time. By reversing the changes linguists are able to arrive at the reconstructed Proto-Indo-European language.⁶

Indo-European cultural comparativism is dependent on this essentially linguistic reconstruction. It would not be able to exist without linguistic science, which has long upheld the view that Indo-European languages derive from a common source.⁷ The fact that Greek, Latin and Sanskrit are related is indisputable, and should be obvious to anyone who has had a chance to learn these languages. The first to bring this fact to wider attention (in 1786) was William Jones, who learned Sanskrit

⁴ 2007: 165. Rightly pointing out that there are now comparative mythologies other than Indo-European (for which see Segal 2010: 315-21) and that comparativism may aim to reconstruct wider cultural phenomena beyond mythology and religion.

⁵ For greater detail see Mallory and Adams 2006: 12-14.

⁶ Discussion of methodology in Colarusso 1998: 103-6; Mallory and Adams 2006: 39-53 (with references).

⁷ Unlike classics or anthropology, linguistics is a science (in the Anglo-Saxon tradition of that word) as it relies on empirical observation. Thus, postulated reconstructions have often been confirmed (see Anthony 2007: 30-2).

as a British judge in colonial Calcutta.⁸ By that time he had already published a grammar of Persian and with his classical training he could not help but notice that Greek, Latin and Sanskrit (and his native Welsh) simply share too many similarities for this to be a result of mere chance.⁹ Parallels such as, *dām-domus*, *deus-daiva*, *mater-mātār*, *pater-pītar*, *septem-sapta* and *regis-raja* are transparently derived from a common source. Vocabulary (which may be borrowed) is of course not the only aspect that leads to this conclusion. Far more remarkable evidence is provided by grammatical structures, such as types of conjugation and declension.¹⁰

The reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European mother tongue is not solely a linguistic endeavour devoid of cultural implications. The reconstructed terms give us a glimpse into Indo-European civilisation. In the previous chapter, we have seen this in the example of vocabulary related to husbandry (cattle, sheep, goats, etc.). A significant breakthrough in the reconstruction of Indo-European social institutions in this manner was made by Benveniste.¹¹ Calvert Watkins presents the logic behind such endeavours:¹²

Given linguistic evidence in the Indo-European languages for common etyma in form and function for a given social or legal institution—and an obvious example is the system of kinship terms—it is a necessary fact that social or legal institutions existed in the society of speakers of Common Indo-European. To deny this is to deny to the reconstructed language the status of a vehicle of human communication.

In other words, a language implies a culture. As mythology provides the means to think about the world and gives society meaning and function, it is one of the most prominent aspects of culture. One of the most influential mythmakers of the modern age, J.R.R. Tolkien was on the same track when he referred to Esperanto and other constructed languages as ‘dead, far deader than ancient unused languages, because

⁸ It should be said that Jones had predecessors. Classically trained Jesuits who came to India were struck by the similarities. Johann Elichmann (1640) and Marcus Zuerius van Boxhorn (in 1647) were the first to give the notion a scholarly elaboration and propose a common origin for European and Indo-Iranian languages (see Blench 2004: 53-4, 63-4).

⁹ Anthony 2007: 6-8.

¹⁰ Mallory and Adams 2006: 5-6.

¹¹ *Vocabulaire des Institutions Indo-Européennes* (1969).

¹² Watkins 1970: 322.

their authors never invented any Esperanto legends'.¹³ In Tolkien's view, a language is not a language without mythology.

The supposition that Indo-European language and mythology are inseparable came naturally to many 19th century scholars who were the first to begin the work on the latter's reconstruction. Unfortunately, such studies were based on a Romantic vision that imagined primitive civilisations in unity with nature and consequently saw natural phenomena as the basis of all Indo-European myths. As Puhvel puts it, the proponents advocated 'nature allegory tinged with a monomaniacal reductionism to one single type' such as storm gods (Adalbert Kuhn), fire (Johannes Hertel), and moon myths (Georg Hüsing).¹⁴ The most influential was the solar theory¹⁵ of Friedrich Max Müller, who received wide acclaim and became Oxford's first Professor of Comparative Philology. In the next generation, Sir James George Frazer engaged in comparative work on an even grander scale, but advocated an evolutionary view of religion, with open condescension towards the religion of the 'primitives'. Oswyn Murray argues that such theories were popular because they supported the ideology of imperialism (not least the British Empire) with its claim of introducing civilisation to the "primitives".¹⁶ Unsurprisingly, these grand theories did not produce many results that we would still consider valid.¹⁷ Consequently, comparative mythology lagged behind comparative philology, which continued to develop and make significant advances.

A new path was opened in the interwar period with the advent of George Dumézil, who introduced structural comparison to supplant linguistic methods. Dumézil saw myths as types of narrative whose content may be compared on the level

¹³ In Carpenter 1981: 231.

¹⁴ Puhvel 1987: 13-4.

¹⁵ First elaborated by Charles François Dupuis, who in 1795 published his *Origine de tous les cultes* (in four volumes) arguing that all gods from Osiris and Jupiter to Mithra and Christ are forms of a universal solar deity (see J.Z. Smith 1990: 26-33).

¹⁶ Murray 2010: 119-29.

¹⁷ Although it made a great impression on much of 20th century literature (see Vickery 1976).

of themes, sequences and cycles.¹⁸ His view was that myth can maintain a significant part of its structure through millennia of transmission, even when the language used to transmit it has significantly changed. As grammatical structures are used in Indo-European linguistic reconstruction, so narrative structures can be used to demonstrate a common origin in cultural comparativism. A mythical structure has a greater chance of survival if it has a function in a particular society, and especially if the function is a religious one. As an example, Dumézil's offers his comparison of the Roman *flamen Dialis* and the Indian *brahman*.¹⁹ The similarities between these two words led to the reconstruction **bhlaǵhmēn*, which is linguistically problematic and uncertain.²⁰ However, Dumézil adduced a specific set of taboos that binds both these figures in historical Rome and India, and which can leave very little doubt as to their common origin. I bring the results of the comparison:²¹

1. The F.D. cannot be forced to swear an oath.
The Brahmin cannot be subpoenaed as a witness.
2. The F.D. must not set eyes on an army.
The Brahmin must stop religious activity in the proximity of warfare.
3. The F.D. must not mount or even touch a horse.
The Brahmin must not pursue religious study on horseback or on any other conveyance.
4. The F.D. must not go near a funeral pyre.
The Brahmin must avoid smoke from a funeral pyre and stop religious activity at the passage of a funeral procession.
5. The F.D. must avoid intoxicants and fermented substances.
The Brahmin must not ingest alcohol.
6. The F.D. must not rub himself with oil outdoors.
The Brahmin, after rubbing his head, must not get oil on other parts of his body.
7. The F.D. must not touch raw meat.
The Brahmin must not eat nonsacrificial meat nor take any alms from a butcher, brewer, or operator of oil press or brothel.

¹⁸ Leavitt 2006: 55-6.

¹⁹ Dumézil 1935; 1949: 16-46.

²⁰ Mallory-Adams 2006: 413.

²¹ As summarised by Puhvel 1987: 156-7. We shall see how this relates to the Luperici in the next chapter.

8. The F.D. must not touch or even mention a dog.
The Brahmin must not read the Veda when he hears a dog bark or eat food that has been in contact with dogs or with breeders.

9 The F.D. must never, not even at night, doff entirely the insignia of his priesthood, and his wife the flaminica must ascend only by a closed staircase lest bystanders below glimpse her lower anatomy.
The Brahmin must never be stark naked nor see his wife in the nude.

10. The person of F.D. is sacrosanct, hence laying hands on him (*flamini manus inicere*) is an aggravated crime.
The killing of a Brahmin is the supreme felony, which even reverberates into the supernatural realm.

This parallel may serve to illustrate several aspects of comparative work. Firstly, comparativism never implies identity, as most of its critics erroneously believe. Behind a specific set of curious taboos, we glance at a structure that is remarkably similar and cannot be a result of mere chance or an anthropological universal. We may also safely exclude borrowing or diffusion as a possible cause since Roman and Vedic religion were not in contact and both the priesthoods are too ancient for the features to be transmitted later through the vast distance of the Hellenistic world. According to the criteria delimited by Watkins, common inheritance is then the only reasonable explanation for the striking similarities.²² However, even in cases of extreme conservatism, we may detect changes through time resulting in differences between the Vedic and the Roman system. For example, the flamen was bound with several other taboos that do not found a clear Indian parallel.²³ Also, the Roman injunction simply bans the flamen from touching a dog and raw meat, whereas the Indian system is more elaborate. Nevertheless, the general categories (dog, meat, etc.) are specific enough for us to deduce common heritage and we may conclude that comparative mythology has succeeded where previous attempts of comparative linguistics (to reconstruct a common term based on regular sound changes) have failed.

²² Watkins 1970: 322.

²³ Which I address with regard to his relationship to the Luperci below, p. 260.

As Colarusso argues, a comparativist is in constant search for such instances, and attention to detail is an essential part of this philological endeavour. In the absence of phonetic laws that guide the linguist towards a conclusion, a comparativist may seek to find correspondences specific enough to indicate common heritage.²⁴ An odd detail in Roman religion may often be explained through a reference to its Indian cognate, or vice versa. Thus we may come to understand that a ritual or a myth owes its specificity to an underlying tradition, much older than the historical Rome or India.²⁵ If we understand the background behind the injunctions of the brahmin and flamen, this does not imply that we have arrived at their meaning. The functions of the flamen and the brahmin are very different and reflect their roles in their respective societies. To observe such differences may be an interesting and equally as important part of comparative work as noting similarities.²⁶ For instance, we may ask why is the *flamen Dialis* a specialised priest of Jupiter (with a whole range of other *flamines*), whereas the brahmin is generally an officiant at Vedic sacrifice.

It is also important to bear in mind that we do not seek to postulate a homogenous Proto-Indo-European culture, as that of one nation with all its laws, customs, religion, etc. The flamen-brahmin correspondence establishes a correlation, as *pater-pitar* does in linguistics. Linguists proceed to reconstruct a term **pH2-ter*, where the asterisk implies a reconstruction that lacks attestation. They do not assume that this was exactly how the speakers of Proto-Indo-European pronounced the word. It is a construct that helps us understand the historical development of the attested Indo-European languages. Similarly, with culture, we do not dream of telling myths as they were told in the steppes over five thousand years ago.²⁷ The idea of an ‘original’ myth with ‘secondary’ manifestations is absurd in an oral culture where myths are

²⁴ An excellent discussion in Colarusso 1998: 103-17.

²⁵ Two striking examples in Dumézil 1970a: 50-5, 83-8.

²⁶ For a good discussion of other misconceptions about comparativism see Segal 2010: 321-33.

²⁷ The Indo-European homeland, from which the speakers of Proto-Indo-European set on their migrations is a debated topic. The currently dominant view situates it in the Pontic-Caspian steppes. See Anthony 2007 and Mallory-Adams 2006: 442-63.

constantly retold and (to some extent) reshaped.²⁸ The notion of an original myth from which other versions come as secondary corruptions is itself a myth. However, the reconstruction does help towards understanding a part of the prehistory of Roman and Indian culture, a stage that preceded their historically attested societies. Comparison enables us to isolate religious aspects that belong not with native invention or borrowing, but Indo-European heritage.²⁹ From this perspective it is not enough to say (as Rüpke does) that flamen points to ‘an old institutional pattern’ without at least citing (if not discussing) this evidence.³⁰

One aspect of Dumézil’s comparative mythology is as frequently discussed as it is (still) poorly understood. Dumézil’s structural comparison has often been taken as synonymous with his theory of the functions, especially amongst Anglo-American classicists. Although the theory plays an important role in Dumézil’s enormous body of work (over 17000 pages), his discoveries range too widely to be reduced to this single aspect.³¹ As Leavitt points out, Dumézil himself was irritated to see his work being reduced to trifunctionality and sought to stress many other themes he had studied.³² There are many comparative subjects that do not fit the trifunctional mould, which in any case should not be seen as the ‘essence’ of comparativism.³³ I am inclined to agree with Leavitt’s lucid argument. Dumézil presented overwhelming evidence for the functions as an important element in Indo-European ideology, and anthropological assessments have added to its probability.³⁴ However, this does not imply that every myth or ritual we aim to reconstruct can (or should) be analysed in theoretical terms. In the previous chapter, we have seen how the trifunctional theory

²⁸ Feeney (1998: 47-70) rightly criticises attempts to see Greek mythology in Rome as ‘secondary’ and ‘derivative’, but fails to see that native Italic mythology and Indo-European heritage in Rome are (at least) just as important.

²⁹ Dumézil 1949: 29-32.

³⁰ Rüpke 2012: 20.

³¹ See Woodard 2006: 20-39 and Vuković 2014: 145-54.

³² Leavitt 2006: 56-7.

³³ Leavitt 2006: 55-78.

³⁴ See references in the previous chapter, p. 198, n. 171. Pierre and André Sauzeau (2012) have sought to expand the theory to a fourth function, which is also advocated by Allen (1987), who further divides it into a positive and a negative aspect, thus making the structure ‘pentadic’.

can be successfully applied to the foundation war (with the Sabines), but the parallel which I shall seek to establish in this chapter can hardly fit the mould.

A theory of the functions (whether Dumézil's or some of his successors') runs into the same danger as any other theory, and this may also be observed in the recent application of postmodern theory to other areas of classics: it can overstep its boundaries. No theory is so 'grand' that it can be successfully applied to every aspect of human culture. There is a limit to its applicability, and cases where it cannot be applied should necessarily exist. If universalistic tendencies persist in humanistic research, they take on the proportions of a religious dogma, not an objective attempt to explain the given data. For example, the problem of monolithic naturalist theories was in their tendency to explain the whole of the Indo-European mythological spectrum through one single type. This tendency towards universalism may estrange non-adherents, and prevent them from recognising a theory as having any heuristic validity, which then leads to its outright rejection in many circles. We have also seen this in the example of initiation theory in the last chapter.

A theory may not be useful for *all* purposes, but it may be a perfectly reasonable model for *some* purposes. Ridiculed as it may now be, even Müller's solar theory has some value, for we still acknowledge the fact that the Indo-Europeans had a sun god (but this is only a small part of comparative mythology).³⁵ My point is that one faces a double danger with Dumézil's trifunctionality, as with other theories. One extreme view seeks to reject it *a priori*, while the other holds it up as a universal pane through which to see every comparative reconstruction. I argue for a middle ground between the two extremes. One should carefully weigh the evidence in each particular case before applying a theory. In short, Dumézil's trifunctionality may be applied to many aspects of comparative mythology, but certainly not all of them. For example,

³⁵ See M.L. West 2007: 194-217. It should be said that most comparatists use the theory in some way, e.g. Briquel (1976); Sergent (1995); Woodard (2006).

Martin West's treatment of Indo-European mythology has produced successful results, but he never uses trifunctionality.³⁶

Cross-cultural comparativism is not a case of special pleading, as if the notion of Indo-European comparison is somehow completely different from other methods used in classical scholarship. Indo-European comparativism is merely an extension of comparative endeavours that are well established in the humanities. A historical discipline necessarily engages in a comparative endeavour. If we wish to study a particular phenomenon in Roman religion, e.g. sacrifice, we take into account its various instances across a wide span of space and time. An offering in 4th century BC Rome may be compared to an offering made by a Roman official in 4th century AD Anatolia in order to reveal similarities and differences in this type of sacrifice.³⁷ Indo-European comparativism occurs on a grander scale, but it implies the same kind of continuity through centuries of cultural diversity. Although mid-Republican Rome and Anatolia of the late Empire represent very different cultural contexts, it is quite possible for them both to manifest the same type of sacrifice, transmitted through space and time. As Colarusso argues, this is one aspect that the comparison of Indo-European language and culture share. They are memorised and transmitted and modified to the current circumstances.³⁸

As speakers learn a language from the previous generation, so poets and religious specialists learn certain rituals and formulae that they pass on. In some cases, a particular feature may be changed beyond recognition in the process of transmission, but in others it may preserve much of its distinctiveness as in the case of flamen-brahmin or the strong equivalence between Indo-European poetic formulae,

³⁶ M.L. West 2007: 4.

³⁷ I take my cue from Schjødtt (2012: 263-87) and his defence of comparativism in the case of the religion of pre-Christian Scandinavia.

³⁸ There is no place here to join the heated debate on the issue of oral transmission in Rome, much of which concerns the role of drama. See Wiseman 1989: 129-37 and Rodriguez-Mayorgas 2010: 95-7 (with references).

extensively documented by Watkins.³⁹ Thus the procedure involved in the reconstruction of Indo-European comparative religion is basically the same as the procedure used to reconstruct Roman religion. If an objection is raised for the former, an objection must also be raised for the latter, and then we shall not be talking about Roman religion (or religions) at all but only a plurality of unrelated case studies, and the worldview of individual authors, like Cato or Varro (or even their particular works). As Segal argues, a good scholarly work necessarily speaks in categories (law, religion, sacrifice, etc.), and studies the relationships between phenomena. The alternative is postmodern skepticism which sees nothing but a series of unrelated and happenstance particulars, or ‘a heap of broken images’ as Eliot put it.⁴⁰

In order to demonstrate the similarities between comparative mythology and other methods in ancient history we may look at the example of Wiseman’s interpretation of Faunus. Although Wiseman clearly misinterprets Indo-European comparativism as a synchronic method that denies differences, he uses a comparative method in his attempt to explain the god of the Lupercalia.⁴¹ Most scholars nowadays agree that the Lupercalia was dedicated to Faunus and we have seen that the sources consistently convey the same idea.⁴² But Wiseman has attempted to argue that Pan is the god of the festival by taking literally the *interpretatio Graeca* of the Greek sources. The fact that Greek authors, since Eratosthenes (in the third century BC) up to Plutarch refer to Pan as the god of the Lupercal, means no more than the fact that they refer to Jupiter as Zeus from the earliest period.⁴³

³⁹ The most famous case is the phrase ‘immortal fame’, Sk. *śravas akṣitam*, Homeric κλέος ἄφθιτον.

⁴⁰ 2002: 53.

⁴¹ ‘The trouble with comparativist analysis is that it argues synchronically, and makes no adequate allowance for change over time.’ (Wiseman 1995a: 2) In fact, Wiseman himself leans towards a synchronic approach in much of his research (see M. Fox 2001: 259-61; Vuković 2014: 145-9).

⁴² See chapter 1.1.

⁴³ See also pp. 80-3.

Wiseman supports his thesis on the cult of Pan at the Lupercal with a comparative argument.⁴⁴ In 294 BC, a large temple to Victoria was dedicated on the Palatine, at the top of the *scalae Caci*; the Lupercal lay at the bottom of this staircase.⁴⁵ Pan had a cave dedicated to him below the Athenian acropolis, close to the temple of Nike. From this, Wiseman argues that the cult of Pan was introduced into the Lupercal at about the same time as the temple of Victoria was built. This seems like special pleading. If we accept that the Romans deliberately built the temple of Victoria to match that of Nike in Athens (which is possible), it does not follow that the Lupercal was then dedicated to Pan. Wiseman's comparativism supposes that the (possible) borrowing of one element implies the same happens with the other.⁴⁶ It would in fact be very difficult to imagine that the Lupercal complex, bearing very ancient ritual and mythological associations, suddenly adopted a Greek pastoral divinity into its centre. It is even less likely that the cave 'was created by the late-fourth-century architects, as they remodelled the western corner of the Palatine from top to bottom'.⁴⁷ The fact is simply that Pan and Faunus share a number of similarities that facilitated their identification, as in other cases of *interpretatio Graeca* (Zeus and Jupiter, Hera and Juno, etc).⁴⁸ Wiseman reinforces his thesis with an even more tentative link: the myth of Mars' rape of Ilia in the Lupercal is paralleled by Apollo's rape of Creusa in Pan's cave in Athens. The comparison is very weak as it is unclear why the Romans would replace Apollo with Mars, and a motif as common as divine rape of a maiden can hardly suffice to imply a borrowing. Although hardly plausible, Wiseman's argument is comparative in its basis and the only difference to comparative mythology is that borrowing takes the place of common heritage.

⁴⁴ Wiseman 1995a: 4.

⁴⁵ For the temple see A.J. Clark 2007: 56-8.

⁴⁶ The fact that the heavily biased Dionysius (1.32-3) ascribes an Arcadian origin to both these cults is also hardly significant as he does so for many others as well (see p. 80).

⁴⁷ Wiseman 1991: 122.

⁴⁸ The earliest Latin source to conflate Pan and Faunus is in fact Horace, see p. 82.

Another of Wiseman's arguments can be refuted from an internally comparative perspective. In 193 BC, a temple was built to Faunus on the Tiber Island and dedicated on the 13th of February, which was marked in the calendar. For Wiseman, this is 'a strong *prima facie* argument against' Faunus as the god of the Lupercal. If anything, the temple anniversary reinforces Faunus' chthonic dimension as the day marks the beginning of the Parentalia, which continue up to February 21.⁴⁹ As a festival of purification, the Lupercalia forms an integral part of this complex⁵⁰ and the very next observable day of the Parentalia.⁵¹ Wiseman only admits that the Lupercalia and Faunus are 'closely associated', but somehow the god was not the recipient of the cult. This turns the problem on its head. If the two days are closely linked and the sources say the recipient of the ritual was Faunus, why contradict the evidence?

My contention in this chapter is that understanding Faunus as the god of the Lupercal is essential to understanding his festival and a comparative method can shed light on his presence in Rome. We have already touched on the issue of cultural versus linguistic comparison. Culture may change and adapt more quickly than language and such change does not exhibit the same type of regularity as phonetic laws. However, religious institutions and mythical narratives may continue to exhibit the same type of structure even when languages change, especially if they are tied to a particular ritual with an annually repetitive cycle that guarantees its survival in the *longue durée*. In other words, religion is frequently one of the most conservative aspects of culture, as we have seen in the example of flamen-brahmin and as one can easily observe in many rituals of modern religions, some of which can be historically traced back for thousands of years.

⁴⁹ Temples are dedicated to a divinity on dates that coincide with the beginning of his/her festival as in the case of Quirinalia, Cerialia, Matralia, Portunalia, Consualia, Volcanalia, Opiconsivia, Saturnalia, and the numerous temples to Jupiter on his Ides and Juno on her Kalends. As Lipka (2009: 45) observes, temple anniversaries also coincide with a day in the celebration of a divinity's games.

⁵⁰ See p. 44.

⁵¹ Festivals that last for several days continue every two days with the interruption of an odd day in between: e.g. the Lemuria on May 9, 11, 13 (Lipka 2009: 39).

Linguistic reconstruction can take us only a small part of the way. The case of the Indo-European sky god (Zeus, Iuppiter, Dyaus) is exceptional in that respect as it is a case of clear linguistic and functional correspondence. But, in most cases, because of taboo or other reasons, numerous gods are addressed by epithets and other invocations that gradually became accepted as names, thus obscuring the earlier name altogether. It is thus not surprising that etymological cognates in divine names are ‘frustratingly few in number’.⁵² West remarks that ‘we can look for common features distinctive enough to suggest historical identity even in the absence of a shared name’.⁵³ This is fully in line with Dumézil’s structural comparison and a procedure that I will follow seeking to establish the Indo-European cognate of Faunus.⁵⁴

3.2.2 Faunus and Rudra

In many cultures, the distant past is populated by forces of chaos. A primordial mythical time precedes civilisation and the categories of the world as we know it. Monsters, savage creatures and uncontrollable forces of nature are envisaged to rule this obscure domain which, in Plutarch’s view, is equally ascribed to distant time as to distant space.⁵⁵ It is in this pre-civilised context on the line of their mythistory that the Romans position Faunus. In book eight of the *Aeneid*, when Aeneas is captivated by the sites of Evander’s Palatine settlement, his host recounts the history of the place with its first inhabitants: Fauni and Nymphae, a rugged race born of hard trunks of oak.⁵⁶ The literary evocation captures the conceptual essence of the savage woodland deity.⁵⁷ It may be detected already in the *Annales* of Ennius, who refers to his

⁵² Leavitt 2006: 60. The mythology of Vedic Dyaus is much reduced in relation to his European counterparts, but parts of it may be salvaged from Indian epic (see Allen 2004: 29-36).

⁵³ 2007: 142.

⁵⁴ Which I first attempted in Nečas Hraste and Vuković 2011: 100-15.

⁵⁵ Plut. *Thes.* 1.1 See also Ovid *Met.* 1.400. For wider anthropological discussions see Campbell 2006, Beal 2014.

⁵⁶ *A.* 8.314-5. Vergil alludes to Lucretius 4.580-1 and his own *G.* 1.10 and *E.* 6.27-8 (see Andres Apostol 2009: 101-10).

⁵⁷ Also explicitly expressed in Censorinus 4.11 and Gellius 5.21.7 (*Fauni et Aborigines*). See Stroh 1999: 565-6.

predecessors (especially Gnaeus Naevius) as ‘those who wrote epic using verses with which Fauns and prophets had once sung’.⁵⁸ The jibe only works if the Fauni are an ancient (and savage) race of a distant time.⁵⁹ In Vergil we also find the singular Faunus as an ancient Italic king, father of Latinus and son of Picus and here the poet follows a tradition that positions Faunus in the dawn of Roman mythistory.⁶⁰

A frequently observed and little discussed trait of Faunus is ambiguity. The god appears to have many contradictory functions at the same time.⁶¹ A god of prophecy, healing and the joyful rites of spring also has a dark side that includes the domain of death, disease and rampant sexuality. He shares many of these traits with his counterpart Silvanus who is also a savage divinity of nature and equally ambiguous. In his monograph on Silvanus, Dorsey is puzzled by his ‘dichotomous personality’, which seems to involve inconsistencies. Silvanus is characterised as both young and old, he is called ‘savage’, but is in fact mostly a benign figure, and evidence of his cult shows a stark contrast in his relationship to women.⁶² Instead of observing the same conceptual framework in Faunus, Dorsey attempts to discard the many similarities between them in favour of small differences.⁶³ However, the best modern authorities on Roman religion have seen Faunus and Silvanus as two sides of the same deity.⁶⁴ The conceptual basis of Silvanus certainly overlaps with that of Faunus. He is an unkempt nature divinity of forests, fields and flocks, and bears the same archaic associations. In Vergil’s poetic description, the scene in which Venus gives Aeneas the shield is set in a sacred grove at Caere whose roots go back to the earliest inhabitants, the mythical Pelasgians. As Lowe argues, groves in the Aeneid are

⁵⁸ *scripsere alii rem/vorsibus quos olim Faunei vatesque canebant* (Skutsch 206-7).

⁵⁹ Discussion in Lowe 2011: 108-11. *Versus Saturnius* was also called *versus Faunius*, but it is not clear if this precedes Ennius or was in fact an elaboration on his verse (see Kruschwitz 2002: 467-9).

⁶⁰ Implied in *accipimus* (7.45-9). The earliest we can trace the genealogy is Varro (*de gente*, Fracc. frag. 27). See Horsfall 2000: *ad loc.* In Dionysius (1.32) Faunus is a Latin king who welcomes the Arcadian Evander, but as the son of Mars.

⁶¹ For Horace see Babcock 1961: 13-19, for Ovid H.C. Parker 1993: 199-217, for both Stroh 1999.

⁶² Dorsey 1992: 14-32.

⁶³ Dorsey 1992: 33-40. He also engages in similar hairsplitting in the case of Etruscan god Selvans (10-2), on whom see below, p. 236.

⁶⁴ Wissowa 1912: 213; Latte 1960: 83; Dumézil 1970a: 350-352.

regularly places of ancient rustic religion, and this one is sacred to Silvanus, a god of fields and cattle (*arvorum pecorisque deo*).⁶⁵ This appellation, the pastoral imagery and the primordial nature of the place would equally apply in the case of Faunus, whose grove featured in book seven of the *Aeneid*.⁶⁶

The conceptual overlap between Faunus and Silvanus can also be traced in historical sources. The battle of the Arsian forest was perceived as undecided, but a voice was heard from the trees announcing a Roman victory. Some historians identified the source as Silvanus, but others as Faunus.⁶⁷ Material evidence might also suggest the association: one of the best preserved Lupercal scenes comes from an altar dedicated to Silvanus at Ostia,⁶⁸ and an ossuary from Stockholm, which has the Lupercal scene on one side shows Silvanus on the other. If we suppose that Faunus and Silvanus were in fact the same divinity at some point (as I think we should), this would also explain the strange and much discussed ending of Hesiod's *Theogony*:

Κίρκη δ' Ἡελίου θυγάτηρ Ὑπεριονίδαο
 γείνατ' Ὀδυσσεύος ταλασίφρονος ἐν φιλότῃτι
 Ἄγριον ἠδὲ Λατῖνον ἀμύμονά τε κρατερόν τε ·
 οἳ δὴ τοι μάλα τῆλε μυχῶ νήσων ἱερώων
 πᾶσιν Τυρσηνοῖσιν ἀγακλειτοῖσιν ἄνασσον.⁶⁹

*Circe the daughter of Sun, the son of Hyperion,
 in love with Odysseus the enduring bore
 Agrios and Latinos blameless and strong,
 who in the farthest recess of the holy islands
 ruled over all the famed Tyrsenians.*

The authenticity of the verses is disputed and most accept West's view that they are a later interpolation by a mid six-century Hesiodic writer.⁷⁰ Regardless of

⁶⁵ *Aen.* 8.600; Lowe 2011: 99-128.

⁶⁶ A detailed analysis in Andres Apostol 2007: 53-91 who argues Silvanus here invokes not only a pastoral ideal, but also suggests the inspiration of the *vates*, as in Eclogue 10. As he observes, both aspects also befit Faunus, invoked in an ancient grove by Latinus in book 7.81-106. In book 12.766-71 the Trojans cut down a tree of Faunus, which might imply they have desecrated the old Italic religion (Lowe 2011: 121-4).

⁶⁷ Faunus (Dion. Hal. 5.16.2; Cic. *N. D.* 2.6) or Silvanus (Liv. 2.7.2; Val. Max. 1.8.5). Plutarch (*Publ.* 9.6) only says it was a divine voice (ἄρα θεῖόν τι τὸ φθεγγόμενον).

⁶⁸ See Dorsey (1992: 15, n. 2) who points out the dedication of the altar must be later than the relief work (now in *Museo nazionale romano di Palazzo Massimo*).

⁶⁹ 1011-6. The verse 1014 is most probably a later interpolation, for it cannot scan: Τηλέγονον δὲ ἔτιπτε διὰ χρυσῆν Ἀφροδίτην.

⁷⁰ M.L. West 1966: *ad loc.*, contra Malkin 1998: 180-3.

whether it dates to the seventh or sixth century BC, the myth reflects communication between the Greek colonies in the bay of Naples (Kyme, Pythekousa) and their neighbours in Latium and Etruria (all referred to simply as Tyrsenians). Latinus is obviously an eponym of Latium and Wiseman argues that ‘the Savage’ (Agrios) should be identified with Faunus (who is coupled with Latinus in later accounts). He follows many others who suggested this could be a Greek translation of Silvanus or Faunus.⁷¹ West calls it ‘the most attractive theory, even if it cannot be called certain’.⁷² For once, I am tempted to agree with Wiseman.⁷³ However, Malkin draws out a comparative argument which is difficult to ignore. The Greek colonisers of the Mediterranean never seem to have translated local names, but either adopted them or rejected them. Distant and unexplored lands were naturally associated with savagery and wilderness, such as Thera, Monkey Island or Snake Island.⁷⁴ Agrios would then be a mere term of Otherness, used to describe the wild barbarians living beyond the Latins. This I would counter by saying that there is more than one kind of Otherness, if one wishes to play the theory game.⁷⁵ The associations of savagery and wilderness are not only ascribed to other spaces, they are also frequently found in myths of primordial times and distant origins. These two aspects may easily coalesce especially in myths which strive to mediate foreign and one’s own culture.

In the *Aeneid* Picus, the father of Faunus and the grandfather of Latinus, appears to be married to Circe.⁷⁶ Thus, in the Greek version Odysseus takes the place of Picus not only as consort of Circe but also the progenitor of Faunus and Latinus. In other words, it seems that the Greeks who reported back on Latinus were aware of a genealogy that saw him as the offspring of Circe and closely related to a savage (Agrios), i.e. Silvanus/Faunus. But why Circe? The sorceress is best known for turning

⁷¹ See the references in Malkin 1998: 185, n. 25.

⁷² M.L. West 1966: 433.

⁷³ On an interesting appearance of Faunus in Nonnus *Dionysiaca* see Wiseman 1995b: 45-8.

⁷⁴ Malkin 1998: 185-7.

⁷⁵ When Foucault (1984: 46-9) talked about ‘des espaces autres’, he was well aware of ‘les autres temps’.

⁷⁶ A. 7.189. See Moorton 1988: 253-69.

Odysseus' men into animals.⁷⁷ Mastrocinque shows the myth was familiar in Italy at least from the fourth century BC, and associated with the migrating tribes we encountered in the previous chapter: the Marsi descended from a son of Circe and Dauni had a king whom she turned into a pig.⁷⁸ In their origin myths the youths of the nascent people follow a wandering animal, from which they often take their names. Mastrocinque ingeniously conjectures that the common element of animal transformation mediated between the Greek Odysseus/Circe motif and local Italic myths. This would be especially pertinent in the case of the Roman foundation myth and the Lupercalia, both modelled on the initiation motif of predator identification. Connecting Faunus/Silvanus (and Picus) with Circe in the form of Agrios (her savage son) would then be a result of a fusion between a sorceress and a god who both mediate between animal and human realm.

The conceptual basis of Silvanus/Faunus rests on this mediatory role, and a fundamental ambiguity in his nature. As he mediates between nature and culture, the animal and the human, the god is both savage and benign at the same time. This fundamental conceptual opposition is clearly expressed in his appellations, Faunus being 'the favourable', and Silvanus 'the savage'. The ancients frequently derived Faunus from *favēre*, which is plausible from a modern linguistic standpoint,⁷⁹ and preferable to the derivation from the root **dhav* (to strangle),⁸⁰ based on a gloss of Hesychius, explaining δᾶος as wolf (as much as one might want to see the god of the Lupercalia as a strangler wolf). The derivation from *favēre* also makes more sense in

⁷⁷ *Od.* 10.210-474.

⁷⁸ Mastrocinque 1993: 174-81.

⁷⁹ Both Walde and Hofmann 1938: 464, and Ernout and Meillet 2001: 220. At a conference presentation, I noticed my French colleagues are very eager to maintain the 'wolf' etymology (see next note). I opt for the preferred linguistic option, which also corresponds to the conceptual ambivalence of the god.

⁸⁰ The theory is based on the Slavic reflection of **dhav*, *daviti* (choke), and Daunus would then be a circumscription of the wolf, related to Apulian Dauni and Lydian Kandaules. See Altheim 1938: 206-217; Briquel 1993: 82; Mastrocinque 1993: 182-5. Noonan (1992: 11-25) makes much of the Daunus-Faunus duality in *Aeneid* book 12. It is true that Vergil could have intentionally contrasted the father of Latinus and the father of Turnus, but this would then be based on folk etymology (for how would Vergil know of the different developments of the IE **dh*?).

the wider religious context. Latin *faustus* and *favor* come from the same root as does Umbrian *fons*, frequently attested on the Iguvine Tables.⁸¹ Not incidentally, the foundation myth speaks of Faustulus, a shepherd who saves the twins and raises them in his home. This is another formation based on *favēre* and conceptually the shepherd also has a mediating role to play in the myth, together with the ‘domesticated’ she-wolf. As Meurant observes, throughout the world the nature/culture opposition is frequently reflected in pairing a human and an animal character, both of whom come to mediate it.⁸² This *magister regii pecoris* (as Livy calls him) is a human whose mastery over animality and habitation in the wilderness facilitates the period of chaos we have identified as essential to the twins’ initiation.⁸³ In this respect, he is very similar to Faunus, the god of cattle and master of animals who favours the Luperci in their symbolic animal transformation and the twins in their initiation.⁸⁴

We might have an artistic representation of this conceptual relationship on the Praenestine mirror, dated to third quarter of the 4th century BC. In their detailed and careful analysis Adam and Briquel argue that the image is the earliest representation of a variant of the Roman foundation myth.⁸⁵ The figure on the left is a young naked man, wild and unkempt in appearance with dishevelled hair and a goatskin wrapped around his shoulders. He is holding a *pedum* (a shepherd’s crook) and is symmetrically coupled with an older and bearded man, holding a spear and pointing towards the discovery of the twins with the she-wolf (see fig. 8). I agree with Adam-Briquel and North that the figure on the left is most likely Faunus,⁸⁶ while an

⁸¹ In the formula *fons pacer*, which seems to have the same meaning as Latin *volens propitius*.

⁸² Meurant 2003: 537-40.

⁸³ See p. 194.

⁸⁴ See Briquel 1983a: 53-66. Many have argued that Faustulus is Faunus’ doublet. See Bremmer 1987a: 31, n. 33, Noonan 1992: 119-21.

⁸⁵ 1982: 33-65.

⁸⁶ Adam and Briquel 1982: 42-4, 52-3; Wiseman 1991: 117; North 2008: 148-9; against Wiseman (1993: 1-6; 1995a: 5-6) who changed his mind, first identifying the figure as ‘surely a Lupercus, or possibly Faunus’ and then as Pan. But if it is Pan, where are the typical hooves and the horns? Pan is but rarely represented as a naked man without these attributes, as brought out by the bibliography Wiseman cites. The identification of the other figures is hotly debated. See Wiseman 1995b: 65-71 and Massa-Pairault 2011: 505-25.

even more likely identification is Faustulus on the right. The god of cattle and the shepherd of the royal flock are coupled here flanking the benign she-wolf nursing the twins.

The figure originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. The figure was sourced at Adam and Briquel 1982: 59

figure 8 : Praenestine mirror (after Adam and Briquel 1982: 59)

The figure wears a goatskin cloak, which is a typical trait in the iconography of Silvanus and his unkempt appearance certainly reminds one of a hairy (*horridus*) Silvanus.⁸⁷ Many scholars have remarked that the naked man also resembles a Lupercus. Luperci are supposed to wear goatskin belts and carry whips, not a shepherd's crook. But there are many other differences in relation to the Roman myth.⁸⁸ After all, this was an early variant, possibly a local adaptation in Praeneste. It would in fact be surprising to find the myth on a mirror in 4th c. Praeneste *exactly* as it is described over a hundred years later by literary sources in Rome. Justin oddly calls the god of the festival Lupercus (not Faunus) 'naked, with a goatskin cape, in the

⁸⁷ Horace *Od.* 3.29.22-3 and Martial 10.92.4-7.

⁸⁸ As Adam and Briquel argue, many of the details do not accord with our literary descriptions, the earliest of which is preserved in the fragments of Fabius Pictor (3rd century), including the spear of the right hand figure.

same dress in which they now run in Rome'.⁸⁹ It is not necessary to assume (as Wiseman does) that Justin (or Trogus) describes an ancient statue similar to the image on the mirror. The passage is in fact slightly confused.⁹⁰ However, it is important to observe that Faunus and his priests share many similarities that allow one to associate them, whether a modern scholar, Justin, Trogus or perhaps even a 4th century BC manufacturer in Praeneste. We shall return to this issue.

As opposed to Faunus, Silvanus' existence in the 4th century BC can be traced with much more confidence as he was worshipped beyond Latium from early times. We can see this from about a dozen inscriptions dedicated to Etruscan god Selvans, which say little about his character, but the earliest of which go back to the 4th century BC. Linguistically, the Etruscan Selvans is a borrowing from the Umbrian form of the name, and points to a common procedure of Etruscan borrowing of Italic divinities.⁹¹ The earliest Etruscan attestations would then serve as a *terminus ante quem* for the Umbrian worship of the god. Selvans is found twice on the famous bronze liver of Piacenza and in iconography the god is represented as a naked youth.⁹² In Latin, Silvanus is clearly derived from *silva* (woods), which appropriately signifies his domain. In an attempt to define *silva*, Servius distinguishes it from a grove (*nemus, lucus*) by stressing the fact that it is 'scattered and uncultivated'.⁹³ The association between woods and wilderness/wildness comes naturally and in Vulgar Latin *silvaticus/selvaticus* meant 'savage', which was preserved in modern Romance languages and hence entered English.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Justin 43.1.

⁹⁰ He calls the Lupercal a *templum*, and his description of the Luperci does not concur with other sources. The fact that the god is called Lupercus could be a back formation from the ritual itself, as Wiseman suggests (1995a: 6) but the old Latin word cannot simply be a calque of Pan Lykaios. Many scholars have taken Justin for granted, and considered Lupercus to be the god of the festival on such flimsy evidence (see Riposati 1978: 58).

⁹¹ See Steinbauer 1999: 464. I am grateful to John Penney for this observation. Etruscans borrowed other gods from Italic peoples; see Rix 1998: 208-29.

⁹² See Pfiffig 1975: 297-301.

⁹³ A. 1.310. Lowe (2011: 102, n. 13) points out that Servius' distinction between *nemus* and *lucus* should not be taken for granted.

⁹⁴ Meyer-Lübke 1935: 653.

Thus, it seems that the strong ambiguity inherent in the divinity Silvanus/Faunus was resolved in a binary opposition (Savage vs. Favourable), separating it into two gods, both of whom retain their conceptual associations and divine domain, but evolve into separate divinities. Faunus' public cult is recorded in literary sources and no dedicatory inscriptions survive, in contrast to Silvanus' private worship, with a multitude of dedicatory inscriptions testifying to his popularity among the common people. Faunus is publicly worshipped on two days, 13th and 15th of February. His temple on the Tiber Island (dedicated on the former day) and the Lupercal are cult spaces in the centre of the city of Rome and form an integral part of its civic religion. In contrast, the groves of Silvanus seem to be located outside the city.⁹⁵ The earliest source is Plautus who places the grove of Silvanus beyond the city walls (*extra murum*), a place overgrown with willows where the miser Euclio might easily hide his treasure.⁹⁶ Poetic usage retains this image as we have seen in the example of Vergil's grove outside Caere. In his romantic reworking of the Tarpeia myth, Propertius places a grove of Silvanus on the Capitol outside the supposed Palatine city of Romulus.⁹⁷ It seems that the separation of Faunus/Silvanus was primarily onomastic (distinguishing between divine epithets), followed by a stark contrast between private and public cult, and a tendency towards spatial separation (inside vs. outside the city).

Silvanus and Faunus were epithets of a single divinity that later developed a separate existence of their own. This claim can be substantiated with evidence of a comparative nature. Vedic India knew of a highly ambivalent god very similar to Faunus/Silvanus. Rudra is a savage god of wilderness, master of animals and cattle. The conceptual similarity between Faunus and Rudra has been first observed in

⁹⁵ On groves of the god see Dorsey (1992: 7-8, 94-6) who remarks some imperial inscriptions mention groves of Silvanus in the city surrounded by a garden wall, but this is a later period, and such gardens had to be artificially created.

⁹⁶ *Aul.* 674. If Plautus was looking for an equivalent of a Pan's grove (in his Greek original, see Lefèvre 2001: 19-23), this identification is still valid, for his *interpretatio Romana* is Silvanus, not Faunus.

⁹⁷ 4.4.3-6, with Heyworth 2007a: *ad loc.* Propertius describes a grove with a spring and a cave, and I wonder if he had the Lupercal in mind.

passing by Oldenberg in his seminal book on Vedic religion (first published in 1894).⁹⁸ But he failed to develop the comparison and curiously so did Dumézil, who merely remarked in a footnote that Faunus and Silvanus have a ‘homologous Vedic god, Rudra’.⁹⁹ It seems no one has observed that Rudra and Faunus/Silvanus share more than just a savage character and mastery over nature. Rudra’s highly ambivalent character is also expressed in his epithets, one meaning ‘wild’ and the other ‘favourable’. The name Rudra has been variously interpreted: The Indian tradition has often derived it from the Sanskrit root *rud* ‘weep, howl, roar’ as if the god were one who weeps or howls,¹⁰⁰ a notion connected with the aetiological myths of the later *brāhmanas*.¹⁰¹ Given that Rudra’s back is red, the name was derived from the root **rudh-* (as in English red) which is untenable as Sanskrit would retain the aspiration.¹⁰² The most probable explanation, which neatly sums up the aggressive character of the Vedic god is the derivation from the IE root **rud-*, as in Latin *rudis* (‘wild, rude’).¹⁰³ The name of Rudra thus conveys the same semantic concept as the name Silvanus. It is striking that Rudra has also been consistently invoked with the epithet Śiva, meaning ‘favourable, auspicious’.

The adjective Śiva was first applied to Rudra in the Rig Veda book 10.¹⁰⁴ In the hymns of the somewhat younger Yajurveda, Rudra is invoked as Bhava and Śiva, both these words meaning ‘favourable, auspicious’. *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā* is a collection of hymns in the Yajurveda, and the entire hymn 16 is addressed to Rudra, where he is invoked with several epithets, primarily Śiva, e.g.:¹⁰⁵

yā te rudra śivā tanūr ághorāpāpakāśinī \
táyā nas tanvā śámtamayā girísantābhí cākaśīhi

⁹⁸ See Oldenberg 1993: 113.

⁹⁹ Dumézil 1970a: 344, n. 25, reiterated in the case of Feronia (1970a: 418-20).

¹⁰⁰ See Chakravarti 1986: 5-6.

¹⁰¹ *ŚB* 6.1.3.7-8. and *KB* 5.1.9.

¹⁰² I.e. the name would then be **Rudhra*, not *Rudra*. The Medieval Vedic scholar Śāyaṇa lists this among six etymologies with accompanying mythological *aetia* (see Chakravarti 1986: 5).

¹⁰³ Mayrhofer 1992: 2.452-453; Gonda 1964: 112; Dumézil 1970a: 420-1.

¹⁰⁴ 10.92.9. The Rigveda is a collection of hymns composed in the period 1400-1000BC. See now Jamison and Brereton 2014: 3-7.

¹⁰⁵ *VS* 16.2. Unless stated otherwise, translations of Sanskrit are mine.

Rudra, with that form of yours which is not terrible, but auspicious (Śiva) look at us. With that most pleasing form, lover of mountains, look at us.

At the very beginning the poet sees Rudra's nature as twofold, and wishes to invoke only its favourable (not the terrible) form, as in the Rigveda which explicitly says 'it is only his benevolence that we choose'.¹⁰⁶ This 'dual nature' as Jamison and Brereton call it, is present throughout the long hymn, and the epithet Śiva is used several times to invoke his benevolent aspect:¹⁰⁷

nāmaḥ śambhavāya ca mayobhavāya ca
nāmaḥ śaṃkarāya ca mayaskarāya ca nāmaḥ
śivāya ca śivātarāya ca

*Homage to the cause of happiness and to the cause of well-being,
homage to the maker of happiness and to the maker of well-being, homage
to the auspicious (Śiva), homage to the more auspicious.*

Rudra is here also invoked with the epithets Bhava and Śarva, which both convey the same semantic concept as Śiva, the equivalent of Roman Faunus.¹⁰⁸ Curiously, these epithets later gain a separate existence of their own. In the *Atharvaveda*, which is dated to the beginning of the first millennium BC, Bhava and Śarva become separate divinities, but by nature indistinct from Rudra.¹⁰⁹ The adjective Śiva, which we find commonly applied to Rudra, later became the name of the famous Hindu divinity of classical Hinduism, a deity still worshipped by millions of Śaivites. As in the case of Faunus/Silvanus, the binary opposition needed to separate the ambiguity at least in name if it could not in nature.

The semantic overlap between the epithets of the Indian and Roman divinity suggest the existence of an Indo-European god of the wilderness who is ambiguously characterized as wild and savage (Silvanus—Rudra), yet also as propitious and favourable (Bhava/Śiva—Faunus). Given that savagery is the more salient characteristic one might suspect that Silvanus-Rudra is the older and more original

¹⁰⁶ RV1.114.4.

¹⁰⁷ VS16.41. The epithet also appears in verses 16.49, 51.

¹⁰⁸ Given that Śarva finds an equivalent in the Avestan Saurva (demonised in Zoroaster's reform, Puhvel 1987: 98) he must have had a separate existence of his own when he was drawn into the conceptual circle of Rudra and syncretised with him.

¹⁰⁹ AV2.27; 4.28; 6.93; 10.1.23; 11.2.

semantic concept, and Faunus-Śiva merely a euphemism, invented to appease and tame the wild divinity.¹¹⁰ This option can never be completely discarded, but given that both forms of the binary opposition appear from the earliest period of attestation in both the traditions I would refrain from such a conclusion. The god is invoked as both savage and propitious and his epicleses are not mere linguistic elaborations. They encapsulate the very essence of the highly ambivalent god. Rudra's ambiguity is so conspicuous that many scholars have seen it as puzzling and argued that the outsider god must be non-Aryan, an intruder of the local non-Indo-European population. Srinivasan has argued against this interpretation by analysing Rudra's relationship with other Vedic gods, some of whom are also sometimes characterised as both dangerous and beneficial.¹¹¹ Any god can be ambivalent in the sense that he may either confer his blessings or reserve them, either reward or punish his followers.¹¹² Agni and Vāyu are sometimes characterised as both terrible and merciful, but the fact does not detract from their conceptual basis as the fire god of sacrifice and the god of the wind, respectively. In contrast, the ambivalence of Rudra is central to his character and this *coincidentia oppositorum* is inherited by his successor, Śiva who is famous for uniting numerous contradictory traits.¹¹³

In terms of methodology, this is a linguistic comparison, which establishes common heritage in terms of specific semantic content, but not through an etymological relationship (Silvanus and Rudra are not derived from the same root). This is not at all surprising as lexical renewal is a common linguistic process, perhaps

¹¹⁰ As in the Erinyes turning to *Eumenides*, the title of Aeschylus' play.

¹¹¹ 1983: 543-51.

¹¹² The famous episode of Apollo's (as god of healing) plague from the beginning of the *Iliad* comes to mind. This has even led some to compare Apollo to Rudra (M.L. West 2007: 148), but the similarity is too general.

¹¹³ As shown by Doniger O'Flaherty's in her excellent study, *Śiva: The Erotic Ascetic* (1981). I refrain from discussing the Śiva of classical Hinduism, and his complex relationship to Vedic Rudra. The mythology of Śiva is most extensive and the relationship to his Vedic predecessor hotly debated (see Bhattacharji 1962: 85-128, Chakravarti 1986). It seems certain, however, that the development of his cult has incorporated many local non-Aryan traditions (Flood 1996: 148-73).

more common in religious terminology than elsewhere (because of tabooisation).¹¹⁴ By comparing the divine domains of Rudra and Faunus/Silvanus I shall try to show that these gods also share strong structural and ritual parallels.

Savagery

The first and most conspicuous aspect of Rudra is his savage nature, encapsulated in his very name. Only three entire hymns of the Rig Veda are dedicated to Rudra alone,¹¹⁵ but he is also referred to in other hymns (especially 1.43), with 75 references altogether. He is depicted as terrible and fierce (*bhīma*, *ugra*), and compared to a wild beast.¹¹⁶ He is destructive and aggressive and the poet implores him to be merciful. A series of deprecations in hymn 1.114 is exemplary in this sense and impressive for its vividness:¹¹⁷

These words, sweeter than sweet, are spoken to the Maruts' father, as a means of strengthening Rudra. And give us, o immortal god, the food of mortals! Be gracious unto me, my child and my grandchild!

Slay not the great among us nor the small! Slay not the growing among us nor the grown! Slay not our father nor our mother! Harm not our dear selves, Rudra!

Harm us not in child and grandchild nor in a living mortal, harm us not in cows nor in horses! Slay not our heroes in anger, Rudra! Provided with an oblation, we call upon you every day.

Far away let be your cow-killing and your man-killing! O ruler of heroes, let your benevolence be upon us! Be gracious unto us and speak for us, O god! And so, doubly strong extend to us protection!

These verses are repeated word for word in the Yajurveda (VS hymn 16) and additional supplications to appease Rudra's terrible wrath are found both in the Yajurveda and Atharvaveda.¹¹⁸ While the other Vedic gods live in the East towards the rising sun, Rudra abides in the wilderness to the north¹¹⁹ where he wanders the mountains as their lord and protector.¹²⁰

We have seen that the Roman Silvanus is also said to inhabit the forest and

¹¹⁴ See M.L. West 2007: 78-9 with references.

¹¹⁵ RV 1.114; 2.33; 7.46

¹¹⁶ RV 2.33.11.

¹¹⁷ RV 1.114.6-10 (trans. Maurer 1986).

¹¹⁸ E.g. YV 16.15-6, 50; AV 11.2. See Chakravarti 1986: 6-9, 11.

¹¹⁹ ŚB 5.4.2.10; 1.7.3.20. See also Srinivasan 1983: 546.

¹²⁰ VS 16.2-4; Oldenberg 1993: 111.

wilderness. His savage nature is most evident in his relation to women. The only two accounts of Republican rituals dedicated to Silvanus both warn of his danger to women. Cato describes a ritual that strictly forbids women from attending or seeing the way it is performed.¹²¹ Curiously, some inscriptions confirm this exclusion¹²² while many others are in fact dedicated by women. As the large majority of the epigraphical evidence comes from the second and third centuries AD, it may in fact be argued that the private cult has changed to allow the incorporation of women, especially because of its increased popularity.¹²³ Juvenal still considers a woman sacrificing to Silvanus as a culmination of her infringement of male prerogatives.¹²⁴

Augustine cites Varro describing another ritual to Silvanus in which three guardian deities are invoked to protect a mother and her newborn baby from the harmful influence of Silvanus. After the baby is born, three men would strike the threshold with an axe and a pestle and then sweep it with a broom so that Silvanus would not enter the house and violate the mother. The three gods supposed to repel Silvanus are named after the three objects the men carry in circumambulation: Intercidona, Pilumnus and Deverra. Augustine concludes:¹²⁵

Ita contra dei nocentis saevitiam non valeret custodia bonorum, nisi plures essent adversus unum eique aspero horrendo inculto, utpote silvestri, signis culturae tamquam contrariis repugnarent.

Thus the guardianship of these good gods would not be valid against the ferocity of the harmful god, unless there was a number of them fighting against one who is a rough, horrendous, uncivilised creature of woodland, and whom they repel with, so to speak, opposing emblems of cultivation.

It seems Varro interpreted these objects as signs of agriculture meant to repel the forest god of wilderness. Dorsey considers this to be an ‘odd’ explanation since Silvanus is also a god of the fields as he is of the woods.¹²⁶ But the whole point is that Silvanus is polyvalent. This is borne out by a passage of the *Gromatici Veteres*, which

¹²¹ A.C. 83.

¹²² CIL 6.576, 579.

¹²³ See Dorsey 1989: 143-55.

¹²⁴ Together with wearing a tunic and bathing for a *quadrans* 6.445-7. His 4th-century scholiast explains: *Silvano mulieres non licet sacrificare.*

¹²⁵ C.D. 6.9.

¹²⁶ 1989: 146.

distinguishes between three kinds of Silvanus: *domesticus*, *agrestis* and *orientalis*.¹²⁷ The domestic and the savage are two poles that stand between Silvanus Orientalis, whom the land surveyors saw as a protector of boundaries. The threshold is of course also a boundary, one that stands between the domestic and the uncivilised. Briquel is thus right to consider that the whole ritual is about the household and separation of the domestic from the wild.¹²⁸ The opposition between *domesticus* and *agrestis* is a restatement of the separation of a seeming contradiction in the nature of the god, and similar to the separation of Faunus and Silvanus. Fans of Levi-Strauss may find his theory works perfectly in this case: the contradiction is restated, but never resolved.

That Faunus is perceived as frightening and dangerous hardly needs arguing. At the beginning of a hymn to Faunus, Horace asks him to be merciful to his newly born cattle,¹²⁹ and Ovid advises the shepherd to pray to Pales to be delivered from many rural evils, including the sight of Faunus in the field at midday.¹³⁰ Pliny recommends herbal medicines that will help repel Fauni that come to disturb one's sleep.¹³¹ One of the best known myths of Faunus might explain why one would want to keep him out of bed and why Silvanus is so dangerous to women. Faunus is reported to have beaten Fauna to death with myrtle sticks after she refused to yield to him.¹³² Faunus' priests, the Luperci perform a ritual act of violence against women, using whips as instruments of purification (*februa*) and fertility. The myrtle sticks of Bona Dea have a similar function, as myrtle was used in purifications, but also carried erotic connotations and was sacred to Venus.¹³³ The brutal sexual violence of Faunus is not the same as a few strikes of the whip, which mostly carried a symbolic burden,

¹²⁷ Lachmann 302.13-9.

¹²⁸ 1983b: 265-76. See also Dorsey (1992: 22-3, 36-7) who argues for structural similarities between the two passages (Augustine and the *Gromatici*).

¹²⁹ Hor. *Carm.* 3.18.1-4; later in the same book he mentions *horrida dumeta Silvani* (3.29.22-3). See also Martial 10.92.4-7.

¹³⁰ In his treatment of the Parilia (*F.* 4.762).

¹³¹ *HN.* 25.29; 30.84; August. *C.D.* 15.23. Lucretius (4.580-2) already mocks the notion of Fauni causing a terrifying din (*noctivago strepitu*) in the night.

¹³² See Brouwer 1992: 324-36, and the sources in n. 162 on Fauna below.

¹³³ On myrtle see Brouwer 1992: 336-9.

but also might have been painful at times.¹³⁴ However, the myth and the ritual convey the same intrinsic idea of sexual violence that earned Faunus the epithet *Inuus* which Servius derives from *inire* in the sense ‘to penetrate’.¹³⁵ The fructifying sexual energy of the ambivalent god could be harvested to increase fertility and heal diseases, but the dark side of the same power is expressed in the myth of Fauna, who was beaten to death by such blows. No wonder Cicero could call the Luperci savage and uncivilised, and celebrants of a wild festival that precedes laws and customs.¹³⁶

Thus, Roman Silvanus and Faunus have a terrifying demeanour, which is especially manifested in their relationship to women. Rudra’s violent nature is manifested in descriptions and a series of deprecations. It might be no accident that he is also closely associated with sexual violence, particularly when he is said to be the terrifying result of Prajāpati’s incest with his daughter.¹³⁷

Cattle and animals

The first divine domain of Rudra is nature and animals, especially cattle. Rudra is the protector of cattle, frequently invoked as *Paśupati* (lord of cattle). We have seen the poet imploring him not to harm the cattle, but also provide it with health and blessings.¹³⁸ Rudra is often compared to a dread, wild beast, but the poet invokes him ‘like a cowherd’.¹³⁹

The sutras are Vedic books that describe the performance of various rituals and they show that Rudra’s ritual differs considerably from that of other gods. *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* specifies that any food left over after the meal is placed in a spot to the north for Rudra to take. He receives various other forest products, as Oldenberg sums up: ‘wild sesame, wild wheat, milk of deer, in short things growing

¹³⁴ As the iconographic representations show (p. 38).

¹³⁵ Serv. A. 6.775. Also implied in Ovid, see p. 22.

¹³⁶ See p. 159.

¹³⁷ There are many different versions. In some, Rudra was the result of the illicit union and he must punish Prajāpati. The interpretation of the myth is problematic but it seems to be an aetiology for Vedic sacrifice. See Sheurer 1993: 39-43 and Jamison 1991: 288-97.

¹³⁸ RV 1.43.2, 6; 1.114.1, 8.

¹³⁹ RV 1.114.9.

wild or originating from the forest'.¹⁴⁰ The *Gobhila Gṛhyasūtra* prescribes that at the end of a sacrifice the worshipper should sprinkle a handful of grass with water and should throw it into the fire with the verse: 'You who are the lord of cattle, Rudra, who walk with the lines [of cattle], the manly one: do no harm to our cattle; let this be offered to you.'¹⁴¹ Notably, the bull sacrifice to Rudra (*śūlagava*) should be performed outside the village, and the leftovers must not be brought back into it.¹⁴²

In *De Agri Cultura*, Cato describes a ritual to Silvanus that is reminiscent of Rudra's rites as described by the sutras. The ritual was performed for the health of cattle, in the forest outside the village, and the offering was to be consumed immediately, implying that the leftovers are not brought back.¹⁴³ We have seen that Vergil calls Silvanus a god of fields and cattle, and this concurs with many other testimonies including Horace, who has a shepherd seek him out, and Propertius, in whose text Silvanus orders sheep to drink.¹⁴⁴ Like Rudra, Silvanus is also called a shepherd (*pastor*) and invoked to protect cattle and pack animals. His inscriptions were set up by foresters and shepherds, but also trappers, woodcutters and hunters.¹⁴⁵

That Faunus is a god of cattle should be clear by now from numerous references to him in the mythical cattle raids.¹⁴⁶ Horace (*Carm.* 3.18) describes a rural festival of Faunus on the Nones of December when peasants would gather cattle from seasonal pastures to their winter barns. Horace's commentator Porphyry calls the festival 'Faunalia', but the lack of other attestation and Horace's idyllic setting (lambs wandering among the wolves) makes one wonder whether we should here distinguish between *theologia civilis* and *theologia poetarum*, to put it in Varro's terms.¹⁴⁷ Even if the entire hymn is a product of poetic imagination, the cattle are in fact under the

¹⁴⁰ 1993: 200.

¹⁴¹ As cited in Chakravarti 1986: 24.

¹⁴² *Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra* 4.8.32.

¹⁴³ *A.C.* 83.

¹⁴⁴ *Od.* 3.29.21; *Prop.* 4.4.5-6.

¹⁴⁵ See Dorsey 1992: 18-21, 120.

¹⁴⁶ See chapter 1.3. Otherwise, offerings to Faunus are hardly mentioned. It is probably not a coincidence that the funding for the temple of Faunus came from fines incurred from cattle-breeders (*pecuarii*), *Liv.* 33.42.9-10.

¹⁴⁷ Stroh 1999: 577-84.

protection of Faunus (as Porphyry suggests) and the god is an apt honorand at a village cattle festival.¹⁴⁸ I am inclined to agree with Nisbet and Rudd that ‘Horace draws on the time-honoured rituals of a real fiesta in the Italian countryside’ especially as the joyful atmosphere is reminiscent of the Lupercalia.¹⁴⁹

Thus, Faunus/Silvanus is a god of cattle whose rituals revolve around a village economy just as in the case of Vedic Rudra.

Healing and fertility

We have seen that Rudra is invoked to maintain the health of cattle. The god has a great power over the health of all creatures already in the Rig Veda. His ‘healing hand’ (*bheṣajo jalāṣaḥ*)¹⁵⁰ holds ‘a thousand remedies’¹⁵¹ and he is invoked to remove sickness and ensure health.¹⁵² He is the ‘greatest healer of healers’,¹⁵³ and the ability is passed on to his sons, the Maruts.¹⁵⁴ In the Atharvaveda, which greatly concerns magic and medicines, Bhava and Śarva are invoked to avert poison and grant health.¹⁵⁵

The healing aspect of the god springs out in an important ritual parallel, which we have seen can often be a strong indication of common heritage. In his *action* for the Fordicidia, Ovid describes a series of calamities that upset the natural order.¹⁵⁶ As a result, the land produced no fruit and cattle began to die of illness. King Numa decided to invoke the god Faunus who gave him a mysterious reply in a dream:¹⁵⁷

Morte bovum tibi rex Tellus placanda duarum
det sacris animas una iuvenca duas.

King, you will placate Tellus by the death of cattle.

¹⁴⁸ Porph. *Carm.* 3.18.13

¹⁴⁹ Nisbet and Rudd 2004: 220. It seems Horace was alluding to the Lupercalia at other points (D. West 2002: 158-63). The victim is a *haedus*, offered with wine, and the god is said to protect from wolves.

¹⁵⁰ *RV* 2.33.7.

¹⁵¹ *RV* 7.46.3.

¹⁵² *RV* 7.46.2; 1.114.1.

¹⁵³ *bhiśaktamaṃ tvā bhiśajāṃ śṛṇomi* (*RV* 2.33.4).

¹⁵⁴ *RV* 2.33.13.

¹⁵⁵ *RV* 2.27; 4.28.

¹⁵⁶ *F.* 4.641-72; this couplet at 4.665-6.

¹⁵⁷ *F.* 4.665-6. Renberg (2006: 106-8) argues the myth is partly cast in a Greek framework as indicated by Numa’s divinatory incubation and the presence of Somnus (Ἵπνος).

Let one heifer give two souls in sacrifice!

Nymph Egeria advised her husband to fulfil the oracle by killing a pregnant cow, thereby offering two creatures in one sacrifice. The story ends with the Vestals officiating at the ritual, which restores the fertility of the land and the creatures it sustains. Dumézil has found a parallel for the Fordicidia in the Indian ritual called *aṣṭāpadī* (lit. 'eight feet'), which is offered to both the Earth and the Maruts to ensure the fertility of the animal and vegetable world.¹⁵⁸ Maruts are the sons of Rudra and often simply called Rudrās (in the plural), thus assuming a number of functions of their father. We notice that in India the sacrifice is offered to both Earth and the Maruts while in Rome the receiver is just Earth (Tellus). However, as Ovid reports, it was through the intervention of Faunus that Numa instituted the rite.¹⁵⁹ As Dumézil points out, not only is the sacrifice of a pregnant cow quite rare, but the fact that an embryo is being offered is an exceptional provision that infringes both the Indian and Roman rules of sacrificial purity (that require whole and unblemished victims).¹⁶⁰ This is a case of specific ritual parallelism, which I consider to be the strongest evidence one can find to establish common religious heritage between traditions. The parallel is striking and the ancient ritual context is the vehicle which preserved the mythology through several millennia of transmission. I thus consider it reasonable to add to Dumézil's reconstruction the fact that the ritual was offered to both Earth and a manifestation of Indo-European divinity Faunus/Silvanus-Rudra, either in the singular (Faunus) or in the plural (Maruts/Rudrās).

However, this is not all that we have of the healing aspect of Faunus. Rudra's power over health is not only paralleled by that of Faunus/Silvanus, but also Fauna,

¹⁵⁸ 1954: 11-25; 1970a: 370-4. The Vedic prayer addresses both the Earth and Sky as an elementary pair, an Indo-European couple that we do not find in Roman cult (see M.L. West 2007: 181-3).

¹⁵⁹ It seems that Vergil (*A.* 12.776-9) follows the same tradition when he couples Faunus and the Earth (Terra) in Turnus' prayer to hold back the spear of Aeneas. The poet naturally conflates Tellus and Terra. Servius attempts to distinguish between Terra (the element) and Tellus (the ancient Roman goddess). Thus, he says: *'terra' autem pro 'Tellus', elementum pro dea posuit* (Serv. *ad loc.*). Terra Mater was a calque of Ge Meter (Lipka 2009: 150-2).

¹⁶⁰ In case of pregnant animals, sows or ewes are usually offered (as in Greek religion, see Bremmer 2005: 155-65). As Dumézil contends, the Greek pregnant cow sacrifice to Ge could probably share the same Indo-European origin, but very little is known about it.

their female counterpart. Like Faunus, she also had an auspicious name, and was known as Bona Dea in historical times. However, learned authors still remembered her secret old name, Fauna and the incident where Faunus raped or killed her.¹⁶¹ Some sources report her to be the wife, some the daughter of Faunus.¹⁶² Inscriptions from Rome testify that Bona Dea had many smaller shrines and a few temples. The most famous temple was situated on the Aventine hill and had (according to Macrobius) a pharmacy.¹⁶³ Grateful devotees dedicated numerous inscriptions to her as healer, especially on the Tiber island.¹⁶⁴ This connects her with the cults of Aesculapius and Faunus both of whom had temples on the island, which is still dominated by a hospital dedicated to a healer saint (*Ospedale San Giovanni di Dio*). Rituals of Faunus/Silvanus that also fall into this domain are Cato's rite for the health of oxen and, of course, the Lupercalia, where women sought to harness the god's healing ability for conception and delivery.

In India women also prayed to Rudra for reasons of health and fertility. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* describes a ritual to Rudra Tryambaka in which he is offered cakes and asked to grant health to all the household, humans and animals alike. Young unwed girls then pray to Rudra and Ambikā for a husband while going round the fire three times.¹⁶⁵ The strange epithet Tryambaka ('having three mothers') was sometimes applied to Rudra, and facilitated his connection to Ambikā, a mother goddess of fertility and childbirth.¹⁶⁶ The ritual is obviously very different from the Lupercalia, but it is interesting to observe that Rudra in his aspect as healer is coupled with a goddess of fertility in a rite that concerns the welfare of women. The

¹⁶¹ The mythical episode is not problematic in this respect as it in no way detracts from the healing aspect of Fauna in religious ritual. However, the fact that Macrobius says Faunus turned himself into a snake (*Sat.* 1.12.24) may have to do with the snakes kept in the temple of the healer Fauna. Tertulian (*Nat.* 2.9) mocks Faunus' healing qualities in an interesting way: *Si Faunus Pici filius in ius agitabatur mente ictus, curari eum magis quam consecrari decebat.*

¹⁶² Wife: Arn. 1.36, 5.18; Justin 43.1.8; Lact. 1.22.11. Daughter: Serv. *Aen.* 8.314; Tert. *Ad Nat.* 2.9; Macrobius *Sat.* 1.12.

¹⁶³ Macrobius *Sat.* 1.12.26.

¹⁶⁴ Brouwer 1989: 346-7.

¹⁶⁵ *ŚB* 2.6.2; Oldenberg 1993: 237-238.

¹⁶⁶ see Agrawala 1984: 113-8.

process seems conceptually very similar to the connection between Faunus and Juno at the Lupercalia.¹⁶⁷ In both cases a female goddess of childbirth comes to act in conjunction with a male god to advance female fertility.

Multiplicity

A minor point in the comparison between Faunus/Silvanus and Rudra is their aspect of plurality. Comparative mythology has long ago noted that sylvan divinities tend to fluctuate in number (plural/singular) as well as in gender (masculine/feminine). In Greece these are Silenus and Sileni, Pan and Panes, in Rome Faunus and Fauni, Silvanus and Silvani.¹⁶⁸ Accordingly, we also find the female counterparts, Silvana and Fauna.¹⁶⁹ The fluctuations are frequently attested. Lucilius coupled Fauni together with Numae to mock the tradition that saw them as founders.¹⁷⁰ The oldest and most famous instance is of course Ennius' famous verse to which Varro adds: 'Fauns are the gods of Latins, as are Faunus and Fauna'.¹⁷¹ Such fluctuations between plural and singular as well as between the sexes are highly unusual in the case of Roman deities, and the only other example is Pales.¹⁷²

In the Vedic tradition, multiplicity becomes a regular feature of divinity. Rudra's sons, the Maruts share many of Rudra's traits and sometimes come to stand in for their father. They are frequently referred to as Rudrās (in the plural) and invoked jointly with their father.¹⁷³ Conversely, goddesses are conspicuously rare and unimportant in the Vedas, which reflects the patriarchal Vedic society. However, Rudra does have a wife that appears in the *sūtras*, Rudrānī. Both MacDonnel and Oldenberg considered her cultic role to be decidedly greater than that of other Vedic

¹⁶⁷ See chapter 1.1.

¹⁶⁸ M.L. West 2007: 281.

¹⁶⁹ On Silvanae see Dorsey 1992: 42-8.

¹⁷⁰ If the Fauni here is not simply a mocking plural as 'Pompiliique Numae': *terrículas, Lamias, Fauni quas Pompiliique/instituere Numae, tremit has, hic omnia ponit* (see Krankel 490-95).

¹⁷¹ *Ling.* 7.36

¹⁷² Woodard 2013: 9-10, 31-3. On a possible social dimension of homonymous divine pairs including Liber/Libera, Ianus/Iana see Holland 2010/11: 211-26.

¹⁷³ See for example *RV* hymn 2.33.

goddesses.¹⁷⁴ This also may be compared to the popularity of Fauna as Bona Dea in Rome.

Singing and prophecy

Faunus and Rudra seem to have a curious relationship to song and prophecy. In the earliest period of recorded Roman literature Ennius opted for the Greek hexameter, which he favoured over the native *versus saturnius*. The verse which we have discussed is a jibe at his predecessors, who used Saturnians, ‘verses which Fauns and prophets once sung’.¹⁷⁵ We have also seen Varro’s explanation: Fauns predicted the future by their speaking (*fāri*).¹⁷⁶ This aspect of Faunus remained well known in the Empire. In a cheerful tone of a poem to Maecenas, Horace is able to say that Faunus as the protector of poets saved him from a falling tree.¹⁷⁷ Frontinus calls Fauni ‘the inspirers of those who prophesy’.¹⁷⁸ Faunus was also called Fatuus (and Fauna Fatua), which the ancients always derived from *fāri* and related it to his faculty of prophecy.¹⁷⁹ Thus, Faunus was also a god of poetry and prophecy, as Wiseman also argues.¹⁸⁰ Vergil’s oracle of Faunus is in line with this tradition, which Servius neatly sums up when he says Faunus portends the future with his voice and not with signs.¹⁸¹ This is not an intentional break with the established Roman tradition of communication with the divine (augury, haruspicy, etc), but reflects the mythology of a pre-civilised period, when divine inspiration was not under the control of the state.¹⁸²

Modern sensibilities might make one suspect that the singing of Fauni only

¹⁷⁴ MacDonnel 1897: 125 and Oldenberg 1993: 111.

¹⁷⁵ Singing is what Fauni do in Lucretius (4.580-9), but together with satyrs and nymphs.

¹⁷⁶ *Ling.* 7.36.

¹⁷⁷ *custos virum Mercurialium* (*Od.* 2.17.27-30). Reference to Mercury implies syncretism with Pan, common in Horace. Elsewhere he says it was the Muses or Liber who saved him (see Nisbet and Hubbard 1978: *ad loc.*, D. West 1998: *ad loc.*; Stroh 1999: 577).

¹⁷⁸ *vaticinantium incitatores* (*De Eloq.* p. 85).

¹⁷⁹ *Serv. A.* 6.775, 7.47, 8.314. Discussion of Fatuus in Bader (1978: 31-41) who considers it striking that even the suffix *-tu* which is used to form Fatuus (from *fāri*) bears future connotations (as in *futurus*). Fatuus is also attested in Oscan inscriptions. See Luschi (1991: 113) who argues for the presence of Faunus/Fatuus on Etruscan mirrors.

¹⁸⁰ 2006: 513-29.

¹⁸¹ *Faunus ἀπὸ τῆς φωνῆς dictus, quod voce, non signis ostendit futura.* (*Aen.* 7.81)

¹⁸² See Briquel 1993: 88-9; contra Lowe 2011: 114.

refers to their faculty of prophecy and should be distinguished from poetry. However, to the ancients the two aspects were inseparable (as in many other cultures).¹⁸³ Ennius refers to Fauni as singing and Varro explains it in terms of prophecy. The verb he uses is *fāri*, which means both ‘sing’ and ‘prophecy’,¹⁸⁴ and both connotations are carried by a number of other Latin terms, including the verb *canere* and the nouns *carmen* and *vates*. Festus, for instance, is able to say that Faunus prophesied the future using *canere*.¹⁸⁵ As Briquel argues, Faunus’ vocal appearance after the battle of the Arsian forest should also be understood in this context.¹⁸⁶ Although not strictly oracular, it is a divine voice whose authority establishes the Roman victory.

In India, Rudra is addressed as ‘lord of songs’ (*gāthapati*).¹⁸⁷ His sons the Maruts accompany the god of war, Indra, fighting and singing hymns of praise and are called the ‘singers of heaven’.¹⁸⁸ The Vedic poet asks the Maruts to inspire his vision.¹⁸⁹ Their song is perceived as powerful for it can create and increase Indra’s power, cleave a mountain with the sound of a pipe or make the sun shine.¹⁹⁰ No one can match their poetic skills.¹⁹¹ It is perhaps significant that Maruts sing a hymn of praise just after Indra’s slaying of the dragon — Vṛtra, one of the best attested Indo-European myths.¹⁹² The battle of *silva Arsia* is certainly not a dragon slaying, but the instances might indicate that the vatic aspect of Rudra and Faunus were also tied to battle and war. However, it is certain that both the Indian and the Roman tradition included singing as an aspect of both gods.

¹⁸³ See Leavitt 1997, especially 1-60.

¹⁸⁴ Also in Ennius: *Doctusque Anchisesque Venus quem pulchra deorum/fari donavit divinum pectus habere* (Skutsch 15-16).

¹⁸⁵ *versus quoque antiquissimi, quibus Faunus fata cecinisse hominibus videtur* (Fest. 432L). See also OGR 4.4-5.

¹⁸⁶ Briquel 1993: 79-80.

¹⁸⁷ RV 1.43.4.

¹⁸⁸ RV 5.57.5.

¹⁸⁹ RV 2.34.6-7.

¹⁹⁰ See Macdonell 1897: 80.

¹⁹¹ RV 5.59.4.

¹⁹² RV 5.29.2; 5.30.6.

War and initiation

Finally, we come to the relationship with the god of war, whether Indra or Mars. Rudra, as we have seen is a violent, destructive god. But his aggression is like that of ‘a dread beast of the forest’ and so it needs to be repelled and placated. On the contrary, the mercy of Indra, as the god of war proper needs to be obtained for help in battle. Das points to many shared features of Rudra and Indra and considers their joint association with the Maruts to be the most important.¹⁹³ As sons of Rudra, the Maruts act as mediators between the unpredictable aspect of aggression, represented by their father and the war proper (which is the domain of Indra). On the one hand they assume a number of functions of their father (malevolence, healing, fertility), but on the other they are the constant fighting associates of Indra.¹⁹⁴ Several hymns of the Rig Veda are addressed to Indra and the Maruts conjointly.¹⁹⁵ They accompany him in all his martial exploits.¹⁹⁶ They act as his fighting company, and he as their captain. They help him in slaying the dragon, Vṛtra, they press soma for him, and sing songs and hymns that increase his power.

This connection was preserved in Rome in a great number of instances that associate Faunus/Silvanus with Mars. Firstly, Cato’s ritual for the health of oxen is dedicated to both Mars and Silvanus.¹⁹⁷ Faunus is more frequently associated with the god of war, as in Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ alternative genealogy where the legendary king Faunus is son of Mars,¹⁹⁸ and not of Picus (as in Vergil). As for Picus, the woodpecker is an animal sacred to Mars, which assisted the she-wolf with nursing the twins when they were exposed.¹⁹⁹ Ovid relates how Faunus and Picus acted as

¹⁹³ Das 2004: 5, whole discussion 2004: 3-23 (English), 2002: 139-56 (German).

¹⁹⁴ RV 8.65; 10.113. Wikander (1938: 70-1) was also able to demonstrate that they share Rudra’s powerful ambiguity, being friendly and helpful, but also wrathful archers like their father.

¹⁹⁵ RV 1.171.

¹⁹⁶ RV hymns 1.100; 101; 165-72. Hymn 1.165 contradicts the others by saying the Maruts abandoned Indra in his fight with Vṛtra.

¹⁹⁷ An asyndeton frequently misinterpreted as the name of one divinity. See Dorcsey 1992: 8-9.

¹⁹⁸ 1.31.

¹⁹⁹ References in Camous (2012: 91-107), who would like to see the woodpecker (laughing) at the Lupercalia.

mediators when king Numa sought to expiate Jupiter.²⁰⁰ Numa's chains and a copious amount of wine entice their oracular voice to reveal how Jupiter might be summoned.²⁰¹ The aetiology is meant to explain the sacred shield *ancile*, which was carried in annual processions of the *Salii*, priests of Mars. Mars does not seem to be directly involved in the rituals of the Lupercalia, but he occupies a prominent place in the mythology of the festival. The Lupercal is called the cave of Mars²⁰² and the priests take their name from his animal, an indispensable predatory symbol of the initiation rite. This complex of warrior mythology and youthful savagery is characteristic of the Indo-European warband.

The Maruts are a vigorous group of youthful warriors, and it is frequently stressed that they are 'all of the same age' (*savayasaḥ*).²⁰³ Wikander adduced anthropological parallels to argue that this designation refers to death and rebirth of initiates.²⁰⁴ Oberlies has shown that the Maruts (wearing a belt and golden ornaments) were otherwise modelled on the Vedic initiate, *snātaka*, who takes his ritual bath at the age of sixteen.²⁰⁵ Rudra is the lord of hosts (*vrātapati*), and Maruts are called *vrāta* (host, troop).²⁰⁶ Yet, it is not Rudra, but Indra that mostly acts as their leader. We have seen that the Vṛātya raiders identify themselves with this heavenly host in a homology between the human microcosm and divine macrocosm which is typical of Vedic ritual.²⁰⁷

As I argued in the last chapter, it is in the Luperci that one can easily see a ritual continuation of this Indo-European warband tradition. The relationship between Faunus/Silvanus and Mars continues an ancient Indo-European motif, a close connection between the god of war and his savage companion, who protects and

²⁰⁰ They also appear in Pliny the Elder's (*HN*. 25.29) description of *paconia*, which is meant to protect from Fauns' attacking at night. If one attempts to pick it in daylight, *picus Martius* will gouge out his eyes!

²⁰¹ *F*. 3.291-392.

²⁰² Verg. *Aen.* 8.630-1; Serv. *ad loc.*; *FRHist* 2.100, Fab. F29.

²⁰³ *RV* 1.165.1, also 1.64.4, 5.55.3, 5.59.

²⁰⁴ 1975: 75.

²⁰⁵ See Oberlies 1998: 206-13 (with references).

²⁰⁶ Wikander 1938: 73.

²⁰⁷ For this see Jamison 1991: 243.

symbolically embodies the youthful warband and also appears in the plural. This is why Justin was able to imply that the festival is dedicated to the god Lupercus. The Luperci find a divine homologue in Faunus, a savage and naked god, known for his violence towards women, but also power over health and fertility in general.

The Indian homology between the Vrātyas and Maruts is more precise. Maruts are even said to share the same prostitute, as vrātyas do in the ritual.²⁰⁸ In Rome, it is the rituals and mythology of the Luperci that maintain evidence of a youthful warband, engaged in initiation rites, cattle raids and woodland adventures. The divine patron of the Luperci is Faunus, as Rudra is that of the Maruts and the Vrātyas. The gods of the youthful warband are naturally associated with the god of war.

We may conclude our examination of the parallels between Faunus and Rudra by observing that the gods satisfy all three of my proposed methodological criteria. Semantically, their epicleses form a specific type of binary opposition, which provides a linguistic parallel. Structurally, the gods share as many as six overlapping domains. A strong religious comparandum is the ancient ritual of the Fordicidia, where Faunus and the Maruts share a role together with the Indo-European goddess of the Earth. The Faunus-Rudra parallel may thus serve as a case study in the methodology of Indo-European comparativism, discussed in the first part of the chapter.

The most important conclusion for our discussion is that this highly ambivalent and polyvalent divinity was also the god of the warband. How do we reconcile these many aspects of the god? Given that the Lupercalia was a quaint religious archaism by Cicero's time, we often forget the inhospitable aspects preserved in its mythology: the forest-wandering, killing and cattle raiding, which were still a reality for the Vrātyas of Vedic times. As a savage god of nature including

²⁰⁸ *RV* 1.167; Falk 2002: 34.

all its fields, forests and animals Rudra was a perfect candidate for the god of the wandering warband. The unfathomable mystery of nature that was his domain shaped the many faces and different aspects of the god. Briquel put it nicely in a single sentence: 'Finalement Faunus, à l'image du mystère de la forêt obscure, participe de l'insaisissable, de l'au-delà de toute définition qu'en puisse donner l'homme.'²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ Briquel 1993: 81.

3.3 Contrast and Competition

*Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.*¹

3.3.1. Flamen Dialis and the Luperci

In the last two chapters I have argued that the Lupercalia involved an initiation ritual and that Indo-European comparative parallels may add to understanding the festival and its god. In this chapter I shall try to contextualise that conclusion by bringing some of its aspects in relation to other Indo-European rites, some of which also have their descendants in historical Rome. This will give us a glimpse into a very ancient, prehistoric religion which seems to have thrived on ritual conflict, obscenity and contrast.

One of the most controversial problems in the hotly debated Lupercalia concerns Ovid's *Fasti* 2.281-2, which in the oldest manuscript (A) reads:

*inde deum colimus devectorumque sacra Pelasgis
flamen ad haec prisco more Dialis erat.*

hence we worship the god and the festival transmitted by Pelasgians.
The flamen Dialis used to be here according to ancient custom.

In another manuscript (U), the couplet is written in the wrong place (after verse 316)² and a far later hand emends the mistake by marking the right place and inscribing the couplet at the bottom of the page. In addition, a few manuscripts have *erit* (instead of *erat*), which hardly makes sense with *prisco more*. Scholars have conjectured that *erat* must have come from the preceding pentameter (280: *tum locus urbis erat*) and that the scribe had made a mistake by conflating the two. They argue that the imperfect of

¹ Charles Baudelaire, from the poem 'Correspondances' in Baudelaire 1995: 7.

² Both verses 280 and 316 end with *erat*, which would account for the mistake in insertion. The manuscript is otherwise an authoritative source.

erat is ‘violently disrupting the logical sequence’³ set by the present in *colimus*. However, it seems to me that the whole pentameter is not in line with the sequence. It is an afterthought, giving a cursory remark on the flamen after concluding one whole *action* (on Arcadian origin) and before moving onto a longer topic (nudity).⁴ Given that Ovid’s treatment of the Lupercalia is mainly an engagement with his literary sources, the inclusion of this odd bit of trivia should not be surprising. It is perfectly possible that Ovid had read about an ancient tradition that stipulates the presence of the flamen at the Lupercalia.

The issue is further complicated by the fact that the office of the flamen was vacant from the suicide of Merula in 87 BC until 11 BC, when Augustus restored it.⁵ We know from Gellius and Tacitus that he also relaxed some of the ceremonial prescriptions that had applied to the flamen in the past, and this might have included the Lupercalia.⁶ It does not seem necessary to emend the ‘*erat*’ then. However, the possibility that Ovid is describing the present state cannot be easily discarded, and if one decides to change it into a present, I would favour a solution that keeps the flamen there, such as Bentley’s (*adhuc...obit*) rather than the conjectures of other scholars who would like to keep him away (*ab hoc ...eat*).⁷ The obvious question is why would Ovid mention the priest only to say that he is absent.⁸ But as we shall see, the taboos pertaining to the *flamen Dialis* forbid him from touching raw meat, and naming a dog and a goat, and this is exactly what the Luperci must do. Does this mean that the flamen should have no business at the Lupercalia?

Here it becomes clear that the crux of the problem involves more than Ovid’s text and its manuscript traditions. The problem is that most modern classicists and

³ See Robinson 2011: 215 for discussion with references.

⁴ See pp. 69-71.

⁵ Dio Cassius 44.36; discussion in Marco Simón 1996: 214-9.

⁶ Gell. 10.15.17-8; Tac. *Ann* 4.16.4. An argument from silence may not be worth much, but Plutarch, whose description of the ritual is more detailed than Ovid’s, does not mention a flamen.

⁷ Porte 1976: 834-8, or even worse *flamen et hinc...abest* (Delz 1994: 88-9).

⁸ As Robinson (2011: 216) observes.

ancient historians know very little about the anthropology of religion. The presence of the *flamen* seems paradoxical only because the nature of the festival is poorly understood. Frazer already suggested that the presence of the flamen should be considered in the light of the exceptional nature of the festival.⁹ Anthropologists have long realized that a seeming paradox may appear as an essential component of many rituals. Contrasting elements are engaged in a dialogue of opposites that reinforce each other and thus create a sense of wholeness. This especially applies to rites of reversal, a type of ritual that the Lupercalia neatly fits.¹⁰ In such cases, the common social fabric is temporarily dissolved in favour of a process that Victor Turner called ‘antistructure’. His theories have been more widely applied¹¹ and we shall see whether they can help with understanding the issue at hand. But let us first look more closely at relationship between the flamen and the Luperci.

The meeting of the flamen and the Luperci seems to reflect a very ancient tradition. In the previous chapter, we saw that the taboos of the flamen are closely paralleled to the restrictions of the brahmin, his Indian counterpart, as Dumézil established in one of his early works. He returned to this subject in lectures given at the *École des hautes études* in 1938-9 to propose that the flamen-brahmin structure has a parallel antistructure, that of Luperci-gandharva.¹² Let us first look at the Roman evidence.

The sacrifice of a dog and goat is in clear contrast to two specific taboos of the flamen as Plutarch already noticed.¹³ But there are other contrasts between the figures.¹⁴ Perhaps the most conspicuous trait of the Luperci is their nudity (most clearly in Ovid’s account). The flamen may never be completely naked, not even in his

⁹ Frazer 1929: 360. Brelich (1972: 20-1) is one of the few scholars who also argued for this.

¹⁰ As I have argued in chapter 2.3.

¹¹ St John 2008, especially the introduction: 1-37.

¹² 1988: 33-46.

¹³ *Quaest. Rom.* 111.

¹⁴ Not to multiply references needlessly, the relevant passages are Gellius 10.15 and Plutarch *Quaest. Rom.* 109-13. A number of individual taboos is also confirmed by many other sources. See Marco Simón 1996: 77-139.

own house and his wife must take precautions not to expose herself. The flamen cannot smear himself with oil and must avoid alcohol and fermented substances. We have seen that Lactantius describes the Luperci as smeared with oil (*uncti*), and Cicero refers to Mark Antony the Lupercus as both *unctus* and *ebrius* (drunk).¹⁵ The Luperci use whips as ritual instruments of purification. In contrast, if a convict is led to a flogging and throws himself at the feet of a flamen as a supplicant, he must be spared flogging that day. These are specific antitheses between the ritual of the Lupercalia and the observances of the flamen.¹⁶ The series of specific contrasts points to a system underlying the observances of the flamen and the Luperci.

Other contrasts do not seem as explicit, but may be inferred from circumstantial evidence and the mythology of the festival. For instance, the flamen may never ride a horse, while the Luperci are specified to come from the equestrian order, and share similarities with the early *equites*.¹⁷ The flamen may never as much as lay his eyes on an army, and we have seen that the Luperci are a ritual remnant of the Indo-European warband. The flamen may not touch or even name uncooked meat, ivy or beans. We have seen that the victorious and impious Remus avails himself of the ‘hissing innards’ before Romulus returns.¹⁸ Curiously, the gang he leads are called Fabii, which is evidently derived from *faba* (bean).¹⁹ Ovid’s native Latin myth thus preserves invaluable ancient evidence. Finally, the flamen may not touch a dead man or follow a funeral procession. We have seen that the Lupercalia is a

¹⁵ See p. 91, n. 10. Valerius Maximus (2.2.9) also mentions a large amount of wine in his *aetion*.

¹⁶ Some relationship may also exist between the flamen’s taboo against touching flour with yeast and the fact that the Lupercalia was one of the rare days of the year when the Vestals baked spelt, which the Luperci then seemed to have carried (see pp. 41-3).

¹⁷ See p. 67. It seems then that Augustus did not innovate when introducing this rule, but was in fact restoring an ancient tradition. The propaganda of Augustus’ restoration did involve a lot of genuine tradition. See Scheid 2010: 175-94.

¹⁸ See p. 54.

¹⁹ Plin. *NH* 18.10, see Pedroni 2010/11: 63-5.

central part of the Parentalia, the festival of the dead and that both Faunus and his cave have clear chthonic traits.²⁰

The flamen cannot be forced to swear an oath, nor may he wear a ring, unless it is open and hollow. As Marco Simón argues, these two taboos relate to his sacred status of purity, which must not be bound by any earthly bonds.²¹ We do not have any extant evidence that the Luperci wore rings,²² nor that they were an oath brotherhood. However, these obligations were probably a part of their prehistory as their Germanic and Celtic counterparts did wear rings (as a sign of their vow),²³ and many initiation groups take oaths to seal their mutual bond, e.g. Vrātyas were bound by an oath to Rudra.²⁴ Given the clarity of other contrasting parallels, the flamen's taboo on rings and oaths may be taken as further evidence that the Luperci share a common origin with these Indo-European warbands.

There are a few other restrictions that apply to the flamen, but seem to have no relationship to the Luperci. For instance, the foot of his bed is smeared with mud and he may not pass under a vine stretching above him. However, such injunctions are closely related to others, and may be their extensions. The vine is clearly related to the injunction against alcoholic substances²⁵ while the mud-smeared bed is mentioned in the context of the flamen's inability to leave his bed for more than three nights. Marco Simón's analysis of the sources demonstrates this was originally one night and the injunction against mobility is also symbolically represented by mud on the bed.²⁶

²⁰ See pp. 44-6, 114.

²¹ Marco Simón 1996: 89-98. Festus (Paul. s.v. *Edera*, 72L) interprets the taboo on ivy in the same sense: *quod edera vincit ad quodcumque se applicat*.

²² All members of the equestrian order had the right to wear golden rings (see Nicolet 1966: 139-43). Writing in the late 1930s as the Ara Pacis was being reassembled, Dumézil (1988: 36) relied on an earlier interpretation that identified one of the figures wearing a ring as a Lupercus. It is in fact two of the four *flamines* on the south processional frieze who are wearing rings.

²³ See McCone 1987: 109-10.

²⁴ The fact that Remus is captured by binding in *OGR* 22.2-4 may be a vestige of this trait.

²⁵ Vine and wine, as Plutarch also observed in *Quaest. Rom.* 112.

²⁶ Marco Simón 1996: 103-14. Originally, the flamen would sleep on the ground (not a bed) and this could be a vestige of that archaic state.

It is a synecdoche for the soil to which he is tied, i.e. his community and the city of Rome, which he maintains by continued religious observance.

Altogether, the contrasting parallels are striking, but how does one explain them? Dumézil proposed a model in which the two groups are contrasted along the lines of *gravitas* vs. *celeritas*.²⁷ The Luperci are a swift and savage warband which indulges in alcohol, anomalous modes of sacrifice, and theft. The pious figure of the flamen should be pure from almost anything that may be foul or indecent. Furthermore, whereas the Luperci are able to unleash chaos on the city for only a single day of the year, the flamen is constantly employed in religious observance; as Gellius puts it, he is *cotidie feriatas*.²⁸ The flamen is thus a stable and stern contrast to the savage Luperci and together they form part of a very ancient religious system.

Dumézil also tried to argue that the contrastive relationship between flamen and the Luperci is paralleled by the relationship between the brahmin and the gandharva.²⁹ We have already encountered the brahmin and the close parallels he shares with the flamen.³⁰ What about the gandharva and the Luperci? In the Vedas, the Gandharvas are licentious celestial beings, famous for their amatory adventures with Apsarases ('nymphs') and presiding over various forms of fertility, from virility to conception.³¹ They guard the soma intoxicant, which they also steal and drink.³² They are masters of horse, rich in horses, and are said to be the first to tame them; but they also steal cattle. Most interesting is their initiatory dimension.

There is a myth similar to Apuleius' story of Amor and Psyche, an early version of which appears in the Rig Veda, but is fully elaborated in the *Śatapatha*

²⁷ Dumézil 1988: 33-4, 44-6.

²⁸ Gell. 10.15.15.

²⁹ 1988: 26-30.

³⁰ See p. 220-1.

³¹ The references are countless. See MacDonell 1897: 136-8; Pancharukhi 1951: 1-11; Wijesekera (with caution) 1994: 175-91; Allen and Woodard 2013.

³² The soma dimension is demonstrably old (Indo-Iranian) as Gandharva's Avestan counterpart, the demon Gandarewa, lives in the Vourukasha ocean (*Yašt* 5.38), full of Haoma (=Soma) and other healing plants.

Brāhmaṇa.³³ The celestial nymph Urvaśī agrees to marry king Purūravas, a mere human, on the condition that she never see him naked. The jealous Gandharvas devise a plan to undo the happy relationship and its night-time trysts. When they steal Urvaśī's lambs that are attached to her bed, the naked Purūravas finds there is no time to dress and jumps naked to recover them. At this point the Gandharvas invoke a flash of lightning that exposes Purūravas to Urvaśī, who immediately disappears. After a long period of despondent wandering, Purūravas is allowed to meet his wife on the last night of the year; he asks to be initiated into the Gandharvas, who grant his wish by revealing the fire mode of sacrifice required for the procedure. As usual, the Gandharvas are licentious and rapacious, but the curious twist of the myth is that a man may become one of them through initiation. King Purūravas finds himself in a similar situation to Romulus and Remus in Ovid (no time to arm or dress), and his ordeal is to take him through to initiation.

Dumézil was able to find several similarities between the Luperci and the Gandharva, but these seem to be more vague than the strong brahmin-flamen parallels, and the mythical gandharva do not stand in strong opposition to the living brahmin,³⁴ as in the case of Luperci and the flamen. Moreover, it seems that the best explanation for the multiplicity of the Gandharva³⁵ traits is their mediatory dimension: the liminal creatures mediate between gods and humans as well as in conflicts.³⁶ Vasilkov has argued that the gandharvas and their female counterparts (Apsaras nymphs) are heavenly representations of the boys and girls of the Indo-Aryan initiation houses (*sabhā*).³⁷ This would certainly account for many of their traits, especially the prominent eroticism and promiscuousness, as well as the

³³ *RV* 10.95; *ŚB* 11.5.1 Discussion in Gonda 1975: 202-10, Allen and Woodard 2013.

³⁴ All Dumézil was able to produce in terms of opposition is a single verse of the *RV* 8.66.5, which says Indra smote the Gandharva for the sake of the brahmin.

³⁵ In later Hindu mythology, the gandharva are best known as celestial singers (*gandharva* means music) and the Sanskrit epics present individual warrior heroes as Gandharvas (see Hopkins 1915: 152-9).

³⁶ See Allen and Woodard 2013 who argue for a comparison with Hermes.

³⁷ Vasilkov 1989/90: 387-98.

mediatory role they perform in marriage, not least the myth of Purūravas.³⁸ It also fits the idea that every bride first belongs to a gandharva and then her husband³⁹ and the notion of a gandharva form of marriage as a union by mutual desire. Thus, it seems that the Gandharvas fit the comparison up to a certain point, but without the strong contrast that we find in the flamen-Luperci. The main problem is that the Gandharvas are imaginary creatures of mythology, not men of flesh and blood as the brahmin, the Luperci and the flamen.

On the other hand, the Vrātyas are a living and active brotherhood, engaged in curious rituals. We have seen that they are in many ways similar to the Luperci, and the last chapter has shown that their ambivalent god shares a common origin with Faunus. It is interesting to observe that there is a strong contrasting relationship between the Vrātya leader (*gṛhapati*) and the rest of the group. The leader of the Vrātyas carries an unstrung bow along with three arrows in his quiver. He wears black clothes that represent his state of mortification and symbolic death.⁴⁰ In contrast, the rest of the Vrātyas wear red clothes and engage in rituals involving obscene language and prostitutes, while the leader maintains silence, abstains from meat and must have nothing to do with women at all.⁴¹ He is inactive, sleeps on the ground and is pulled around on a wagon while carrying a goad in his hand.⁴² His dedication to Rudra is also symbolised by his wearing a turban like the god. All these traits imply a state of passivity and ritual purity in the midst of action and potential pollution. Falk proposed that this contrast between ‘Friedfertigkeit und Aggressivität’ enacts the two opposing traits that Rudra exhibits, benevolence and aggression.⁴³ Indeed, the bow that the leader carries unstrung is a form of sympathetic imitation of the god. It

³⁸ Particularly striking is *AV* 4.37.11, which compares the young and hairy gandharva in pursuit of women to a dog or an ape.

³⁹ Which was ritually enacted, see Allen and Woodard 2013.

⁴⁰ *PB* 17.1.14-15; *BŚS* 18.24; see Falk 1986: 19-20.

⁴¹ Falk 1986: 21-3, 30.

⁴² *ŚŚS* 14.72; *BŚS* 18.24; Falk 1986: 23-4. The wagon is pulled by a horse or a mule (*LŚS* 8.6.10-11).

⁴³ Falk 1986: 24-30, 2002: 33-5.

directly connects to the Śatarudriya hymn where the poet implores Rudra to loosen his bow so that it may be unstrung and harmless.⁴⁴

However, it seems that more is at stake here than the ambivalent characterisation of Rudra that we have described in the previous chapter. The leader endures a passive state and is bound by specific notions of purity that contrast with the rituals of the Vrātya group. Many of his observances are reminiscent of the ones that the brahmin and the flamen endure: abstinence from meat and sexual licence, a sombre state of silence and overall passivity, and even accoutrements (carrying some form of headgear). How may we account for this modified reduplication of the contrasting relationship? The brahmin is a figure that ostensibly underwent major reforms in the Vedic period⁴⁵ and the intensification of caste divisions would make it difficult for the brahmin to be present at the Vrātya rites, although he continued to maintain the ancient observances himself. In the absence of a brahmin, the vrātyas would continue to enact the contrast by assigning his role to their leader. This change may be implied in the sources. While *Lāṭyāyana Śrauta Sutra* says that the Vrātyas give 33 cows to their gr̥hapati,⁴⁶ a few verses later it is rather ‘a nominal bramnin’ who takes them and then even shares food with them.⁴⁷ Other sources stress the impurity of sharing food with the vrātyas⁴⁸ and refer to them as those who swallow poison and eat foreign food as brahmin’s food.⁴⁹ It is thus the impurity of the vrātyas that is contrasted with the purity of the brahmin. However, an ancient observance forced the two different religious orders to meet at the chaotic and obscene rituals of the vrātyas, as it obliged the flamen to turn up at the Lupercalia. The specificity of this system indicates it is both ancient and deliberate. It would be impossible to imagine that a series of contrasts between the flamen and the Luperci is a result of mere accident.

⁴⁴ VS 16.9-10.

⁴⁵ See Heesterman 1985: 26-44, 1993: 142-64.

⁴⁶ LŚS 8.6.18. In PB 17.1.17 it is also the gr̥hapati who takes them. For the presence of the *brahmacārin* at the Mahāvratā, see heading 3.1.9.

⁴⁷ LSS 8.6.28-30.

⁴⁸ BSS 18.25.

⁴⁹ PB 17.1.9.

Given that its antiquity is Indo-European, a complete explanation of this oddity is probably beyond our reach.

However, comparative religion and cultural anthropology offer similar paradigms for consideration. Turner has observed that societal conflicts and contradictions are reflected and inscribed in certain rituals. A momentary meeting of opposites may result in partial alleviation through religious means and Turner even developed his concept of 'communitas' to describe the sense of unity and cohesion that a group experiences in such moments of 'liminality'.⁵⁰ In his studies of the African Ndembu, Turner also observed that liminal rituals often employ the dialectic of binary oppositions, which they juxtapose in a series to express conflict in social structure. This creates a series of contrastive elements that need not reflect a single conflict. Particular social elements are drawn into the ritual dialectic, which may have begun as a religious answer to a momentary problem, e.g. sterility. The Ndembu then tie in the sterility-fertility opposition with wider social issues, such as matrilinear descent and virilocality,⁵¹ male and female, and even such socially neutral oppositions as red and white.⁵²

It seems that a similar psychological process underlies the flamen-Luperci opposition. The social conflict that is most likely to stand behind this opposition is that between priests and warriors. Traditional Dumézilians would call it a struggle between the first and the second function. The ancient institution of the flamen has a sacred status that is guaranteed by divine order. The warrior brotherhoods of the Luperci and the vrātyas are also bound by religious observance, but their activities indicate a state of disorder. They are aggressive, and may easily turn to force and molestation to get their way. Problematic as it may be, Lincoln's first book managed

⁵⁰ 1977: 94-165.

⁵¹ The husband decides where the family lives, but the inheritance is determined through the female line.

⁵² Turner 1977: particularly 44-93; see also Turner 1972.

to demonstrate the importance of this conflict in the Indo-European world.⁵³ The place where the savage brotherhood and the priest naturally come to meet is sacrifice. The warriors may take whatever they wish in their raids, but sacred law demands that a part of the booty (especially cattle) be set aside for the gods and their priests. If I am right that Ovid's story about Remus' victory shares a common origin with the myth of Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭa, then we have an example of how this conflict may arise. The wilful warrior relies on his force and craves raw meat based on the law of the jungle. The priest abstains from all such impurities and relies only on divine sanction.

In a very influential modern study of taboo, Valeri stresses the importance of the interplay between identity and difference in taboo formation.⁵⁴ He also observes that taboos of interhuman relationship frequently facilitate a complementary opposition such as male-female, living-dead, etc. Valeri's insight is based on a wide anthropological survey and might help account for the strongly contrasting elements we encounter in our case. The warrior and the priest are a complementary set as both facilitate the survival of society. But the taboos of the priest present him as different from the practice of the warriors. Raw meat and wine form part of a hasty warrior's feast. The dog (which the Luperci sacrifice) is the companion of hunters, and the warrior's use of a horse hardly needs arguing.⁵⁵ The priest naturally avoids the pollution of death, which is a daily reality for the warrior. Just like the colours and sounds in Baudelaire's poem, the contrasts correspond to produce difference, but also a sense of wholeness ('unité'), as in Turner's 'communitas'. But this speculative route may only provide partial solutions. For example, how does one explain the flamen's taboo on beans?⁵⁶ Valeri's detailed study shows that complete explanations

⁵³ Lincoln 1981, see pp. 184-6.

⁵⁴ Valeri 2000, especially 83-113, 349-80.

⁵⁵ On the role of the horse in Indo-European expansion see the excellent study by Anthony (2007). On dog as companion of hunters and an animal that comes closest to humans see Valeri 2000: 189-97; 207-11.

⁵⁶ One speculative route would be to connect this to another taboo, on funeral rites. Beans were used in such rites, notably the Parentalia (Festus, s.v. *fabā* 77L) and the Lemuria (Ovid *F.* 5.435-44), and the

of particular taboos may only be given after a careful study of the society in which they were formed. The contrasting complex reflects a worldview ostensibly outside our scope, although a conflict between priests and warriors seems to be the most likely solution.

To conclude, we can now see why Ovid mentions the flamen at the Lupercalia: the comparison of specific taboos of the flamen and the actions of the Luperci form a system of contrasting correspondences. Ovid's couplet is not a problem of textual transmission that requires emendation. It is a testimony to one of the festival's most ancient aspects, which finds clear Indo-European parallels and also makes sense from a wider anthropological perspective.

3.3.2 Cattle, horses and humans: a sacrificial system

Central to the rites and activities of the Vrātyas was conflict, both internal and external. They engaged in verbal ritual competitions first amongst themselves and then with others before proceeding to raid a village.⁵⁷ They would especially molest brahmins with mysterious questions and riddles pertaining to ritual. This was more than a poetic competition, for a failure to reply in a proper way might result in death or robbery.⁵⁸ The ritual questioning was also practised by the army that accompanied the horse of the Aśvamedha on his yearly pre-sacrificial circuit. A similar type of ritual agonism underlies other Indo-European rites.⁵⁹ Interestingly, the Aśvamedha finds a close ritual parallel in the Roman *October Equus*. Again, Dumézil pioneered this discovery.⁶⁰

Pythagoreans avoided them for fear of eating their reincarnated ancestors (see Pedroni 2010/11: 59-72.).

⁵⁷ Heesterman 1993: 180-1.

⁵⁸ It seems they might also be bought off with ritual gifts (Falk 1986: 44-9). The poetic dimension should be connected to Rudra, the Lord of song (see p. 241).

⁵⁹ For example, the Mahāvratā festival, heading 3.1.9.

⁶⁰ 1970a: 213-28; 1975: 145-56.

The Roman ritual was repeated annually on the Campus Martius and dedicated to Mars.⁶¹ After a race, the right-hand horse of a winning team is sacrificed, a specific requirement we also find in India. The recipient is the warrior god Indra and the horse is split into three parts, separating its head and tail as in Rome. The Indian ceremony was not annual, and could only be undertaken for the benefit of the king (*rāja*), who had the queen lie under the same cover as the penis of the dead horse to evoke fertility and prosperity.⁶² In Rome, which had lost the political kings early in its history, the *rex sacrificulus* maintained his sacrificial duties and his house (the *regia*) was the destination for the head and tail of the horse. The head of the horse is a reward for the winner of a ritual fight between two groups, one from the Sacra Via and the other from the Suburra. The Sacravienses had to prevail in order to bring it to their street and place it at the Regia. Another remnant of ritual precariousness was represented in the figure of a runner who had to carry the freshly cut tail from the Campus to the Regia so as to sprinkle the royal hearth with its blood. Interestingly, while the Romans localised the ritual risk in the spaces of their city (and thus almost completely neutralised it), in India the danger was much more real, for the horse was allowed to roam the countryside freely for a whole year preceding the sacrifice. If the king's army failed to protect it from challengers and contestants, there would be no horse to take part in the ritual.

As we have seen, ritual agonism is a prominent feature of the Lupercalia, especially in myths that portray the struggle between Romulus and Remus, and their two groups, Quintilii and Fabii.⁶³ In the late Republic, the Luperci were no longer recruited from these *gentes*, but inscriptions suggest that the members continued to be assigned to either of the two groups, denoted in adjectival form: Quinctiales and Fabiani. Corsano has studied the history of the two *gentes* to see if it bears any

⁶¹ Sources: Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 97; Polyb. 12.4b; Festus (190L) and Paulus s.v. *October Equus*.

⁶² The copious bibliography was compiled by Dumont (1927). On the sexual element see now Meulder 2014: 9-31 who compares it to the story of Sextus and Lucretia.

⁶³ See pp. 55-6.

relationship to the Lupercalia. The progenitor of the Fabii is said to be Hercules, who slept with the daughter of Evander after the founding of the *ara maxima*. In the background of this mythical complex we are also able to detect the mythology of Faunus, who in other accounts supplied Hercules with his daughter.⁶⁴ Diodorus mentions Silvanus as a cognomen of the Fabii Vibulani,⁶⁵ and Ovid places the defeat of the Fabii at Cremera on the Ides of February, a festival of Faunus.⁶⁶

The connection of the Fabii with Faunus is certainly not surprising, but Corsano's contention about the rival *gens* is both more controversial and more interesting. Among others, the Quinctii bore the name Capitolini, which the Roman tradition justifies by portraying them as continual protectors of the symbolic seat of power from potential usurpers. They are also repeatedly tied to it in historical accounts: the famous T. Quinctius Cincinnatus brought a statue of Jupiter from Praeneste to the Capitol, and T. Quinctius Flaminius also set up a statue of the god there after his Greek campaign.⁶⁷ It seems that the connection of the Quinctii with Jupiter is opposed to the complex of the Fabii and Faunus, and adds yet another layer of contrast to the complex of the Lupercalia. If Corsano is right, the flamen-Luperci opposition would then be internally reflected in the two opposing Luperci groups. We have seen that these two groups compete for cattle in the ancient *aetia*,⁶⁸ and the relationship parallels the antagonism between Romulus and Remus.

It may be useful to consider the Lupercalia along with the October Equus as ancient rituals of Indo-European origin,⁶⁹ and observe that they share this strong element of ritual antagonism. Heesterman, a most influential scholar of Vedic

⁶⁴ On Hercules and Faunus see pp. 84-5.

⁶⁵ Corsano 1977: 143-6.

⁶⁶ *F.* 2.195-242. Dionysius (9.19.1) knows of a version in which they were ambushed when returning home to perform a family festival (which would imply the Lupercalia). See Harries 1991: 150-68 and Robinson 2011: *ad loc.*

⁶⁷ Corsano 1977: 146-50.

⁶⁸ See chapter 1.3.

⁶⁹ Curiously, Rüpke (2012: 48) even conflates the two, writing about 'the mock competitions between the Luperci and the Sacravienses'!

religion, has repeatedly pointed to a phase he calls ‘pre-classical ritual’, which is characterised by elements of conflict and agonism. The verbal competitions of the vrātyas and the army of the *aśvamedha* are remnants of this archaic system. Among such rituals a prominent place is taken by the *rājasūya*. While the *aśvamedha* enables a current king to demonstrate his superiority over rivals and his command of a great territory (through which the horse wanders), the *rājasūya* enables a powerful warrior (*kṣatriya*) to become a king (*rājan*). In this ritual of royal consecration an antagonistic race also takes central place. After a series of rituals that involve donning a tiger skin, recitations and unctions, the sacrificer mounts a chariot invoking Indra and begins the drive with the words: ‘at the instigation of the Maruts, may I conquer’.⁷⁰ The conquest he refers to is a mock cattle raid and victory over a warrior with a bow. The sacrificer must shoot several arrows in the direction of the warrior, who returns them to him. According to the White Yajurveda the warrior is his close cousin (Sk. *swa*= Lat. *suus*), who owns a herd of a hundred cows or more.⁷¹ The sacrificer drives the chariot in the midst of the cows and takes possession of them by touching one with his bow. He returns full circle to the same place from which he started, puts on boarskin sandals and pays homage to mother earth.

Dumézil attempted to compare this ritual to the Lupercalia, following the parallel between October Equus and the *aśvamedha*. If we find that the ceremony of royal sovereignty survived in the form of Roman horse sacrifice towards the end of the agricultural and military year, the ceremony of royal initiation (*rājasūya*) might also have left its traces in the fertility rituals of the turn of the year, and the beginning of spring. The parallel does not seem to be as straightforward as for the October Equus. Dumézil relies on conceptual elements that dominate the Lupercalia and the *rājasūya*. The purpose of the chariot drive is to obtain potency and fertile power by

⁷⁰ *ŚB* 5.4.3.8; *BŚS* 12.12. The most thorough study of the sources is still Heesterman 1957, the chariot drive is at 127-39.

⁷¹ *ŚB* 5.4.3; another version in *LŚS* 9.1.14-22 notes that cousins themselves thus become ineligible for this ceremony.

raiding a foe who is said to be a close cousin of the king (*swa*). The mythology of the Lupercalia is marked by the duality of the two Luperci groups and the contest of the twins. In both cases, the key to royal prerogative takes the form of a cattle raid. The victory of Remus represents in mythical form the Indian *rāja*'s worst anxiety, the fear that his power will be challenged by his closest kin, a risk that the ritual victory is supposed to eliminate. The Lupercalia ritual has no such elaborate precaution and the rivalry comes to the fore in the cattle raid myths. The Luperci do not shoot bows or drive a chariot around the Palatine, although their course was circular.⁷² But the greatest objection might be that the Lupercalia does not involve a king. Dumézil points to the two bloodied youths as representative of the twins and the incident of Caesar's crowning. As I have argued based on Roman historical evidence alone, it is very difficult to see this incident as anything other than a staged attempt at crowning.⁷³ The induction of Luperci Iulii, the enrolment of Mark Antony (Caesar's closest collaborator) as their captain, and the theatrical reactions of the bystanders make this all the more likely. The gap between the abolition of kings and republican politics makes it difficult to draw any substantial conclusions on the matter: none of the sources seem to be aware of the ritual's potential as a royal inauguration and we may suspect the same of contemporary observers.⁷⁴

However, one should not simply ignore Dumézil's proposal as others have done. As a descendant of Indo-European youth initiation rites, the Lupercalia might have also carried royal connotations. On the model of youth initiation, cattle raids were also a compulsory part of royal initiation from Indian ritual to Irish kings,⁷⁵ and often the king was said to be a tested warband leader, like Romulus.⁷⁶ This does not mean that the Lupercalia was ever as elaborate as the *rājasūya*, which Heesterman's

⁷² As we have seen in chapter 2.1.

⁷³ Chapter 1.5.

⁷⁴ As Beard points out (2003: 274, n. 6).

⁷⁵ For the Irish evidence see Lucas 1989: 146-8.

⁷⁶ Alföldi 1974: 86-106.

study clearly shows to be a developed composite ceremony. If there is a connection, it is not a neat one-to-one correspondence, but particular motifs may derive from a common dossier (as Allen calls it).⁷⁷ Similar motifs seem to cluster around the cattle raid, the central part of *rājasūya*, performed under the auspices of Indra and the Maruts, a divine complex that shares common origin with Mars and Faunus.⁷⁸ Both ceremonies are concerned with the definition of space and the liminality of time. Heesterman repeatedly points to the many elements that make the *rājasūya* a festival of renewal at the turn of the year. On a cosmic level, the chariot itself is associated with the turn of the year and its circular course facilitates unity of space and cohesion of the people,⁷⁹ much as it does in Roman lustrations. The Lupercalia falls into the transitional period of the year, and is a lustration that purifies and defines the space of the ancient Palatine, but also inaugurates the fertility of the year as the first festival of the Roman spring.⁸⁰ Through the circular motion of the chariot, the Indian sacrificer obtains power over fertility, which is clearly manifested in the end when he touches his wife with the bow (or hands it to her) saying: ‘this bolt is very force-winning, through it let our son win force’.⁸¹ We have seen that the Luperci on their circular course also dispense fertile power to women, a widespread feature of male initiation rites. Luperci do not use bows or arrows, but their *februa* are made of goatskin, which is widely associated with fertility, as are the boarskin sandals that the Indian sacrificer puts on.⁸² Fertility and regeneration may also be recognised in the use of milk, which occurs after the chariot course in the *rājasūya*. In order to restore the energy the sacrificer is said to have lost and fully obtain ‘the essence of cattle’ he

⁷⁷ See Allen and Woodard 2013.

⁷⁸ See heading 3.2.2.

⁷⁹ In *SB* (9.4.1) the *rājasūya* course is explained through a myth. When pairs of creatures left the frail Prajāpati, he managed to reintegrate them back into his person by encircling them all by a chariot drive. The same integrative power is ascribed to the sun; see Heesterman 1957: 135-6.

⁸⁰ See pp. 134, 157-8.

⁸¹ According to *Hiraṇyakeśi Gṛhyasūtra* 13.6.10, but there are other versions (Heesterman 1957: 130)

⁸² Here it might be worth remembering that the Indo-European root from which Latin *capere* (goat) is derived also has the meaning ‘wild boar’ and ‘penis’ in other IE languages. See pp. 27-8.

raided,⁸³ the *adhvaryu* priest dips the hands of the king into curds. This process of regeneration represents the same mechanism as the Luperci bloodrite and is frequently a part of initiation rites.

The conceptual similarities are mostly of a typological nature and might stem from the fact that both the rituals are clearly initiation rites at the turn of the year. While the cattle raid provides an interesting parallel, the absence of a bow competition and a chariot drive in the Lupercalia prevents a specific comparison. The chariot is central to Indian royal ceremonies, and a spoked wheel still features prominently on the flag of the modern Indian state. But the instrument is not native to Indian soil. Spoked wheel chariots first appeared in the Eurasian steppes north of the Caspian sea, and gave the Indo-European speaking migrants a technological advantage as they spread into Asia.⁸⁴ The chariot therefore appears as a symbol of prestige in Indian royal ceremonies: the *vājapeya* involves a mock chariot race in which the winner king establishes his power over all social groups.⁸⁵ The royal ceremonies of *ásvamedha* and *rājasūya* involve a chariot symbolically and enact the antagonism by contrasting the king with a certain rival whom he must overcome, other kings in the former and his own kin in the latter case. From a religious perspective, the two ceremonies are clearly distinguished by animals, with either the horse or cattle taking central place.⁸⁶ The cattle appear in the context of a raid, but a cow was otherwise a standard offering, and the horse was considered to be a special type of sacrifice, reserved for particular occasions. The prestigious horse sacrifice was

⁸³ *ŚB* 5.4.3.27.

⁸⁴ Chariots first appear around 2100 BC in sites of Sintashta-Arkaim archaeological culture near the Volga river (Anthony 2007: 371-411). See also Parpola 2004/5: 1-62.

⁸⁵ Dumézil proposes the Roman Equirria as a parallel (1975: 161-5), but see also Woodard 2006: 71-3, 179-81.

⁸⁶ Sterckx (2013) has recently attempted to trace the connection of the two animals to sovereignty throughout the Indo-European world.

second only to human sacrifice, which occupied the highest place in Indian ritual texts.⁸⁷

The issue of human sacrifice in Vedic Hinduism is the subject of a heated debate, but most scholars have argued that it was only a theoretical construct, a myth made to complete the sacrificial cycle of creatures.⁸⁸ Whether or not we can interpret all the textual instances as mythical, Malamoud's careful analysis demonstrates that the *puruṣamedha* (lit. human sacrifice) was explicitly modelled on the real *ásvamedha* (horse sacrifice): the victim is said to wander the wilderness for a year just like the horse of the *ásvamedha*, and the ritual prescription require its head to be severed.⁸⁹ It is said that everything that cannot be obtained by the *ásvamedha*, one will obtain through *puruṣamedha*.⁹⁰ An account of human sacrifice is also recited during the king's inauguration, the *rājasūya*.⁹¹

This would be of no interest to us, if Dumézil had not found a passage of Dio Cassius that seems to link human and horse sacrifice in Rome. Among the many precious pieces of information preserved only in Dio, we find a curious report on the way Caesar put a stop to a military rebellion against him in 46 BC. He appeared by surprise and first seized one man with his own hand and delivered him to punishment. Then, according to Dio:⁹²

ἄλλοι δὲ δύο ἄνδρες ἐν τρόπῳ τινὶ ἱερουργίας ἐσφάγησαν. καὶ τὸ μὲν αἴτιον οὐκ ἔχω εἰπεῖν (οὔτε γὰρ ἡ Σίβυλλα ἔχρησεν, οὔτ' ἄλλο τι τοιοῦτο λόγιον ἐγένετο), ἐν δ' οὖν τῷ Ἀρειῷ πεδίῳ πρὸς τε τῶν ποντιφίκων καὶ πρὸς τοῦ ἱερέως τοῦ Ἄρεως ἐτύθησαν, καὶ αἱ γε κεφαλαὶ αὐτῶν πρὸς τὸ βασιλεῖον ἀνετέθησαν.

Two others were killed in some type of ritual. And I cannot say the cause (for neither the Sibyl proclaimed it nor was there any other such oracle), but they were sacrificed in the Field of Mars by the pontifices and the priest of Mars, and their heads were set up at the Regia.

⁸⁷ The usual order is human, horse, ox, ram and he-goat (*ŚB* 6.2.2.18; *AB* 2.8).

⁸⁸ Discussion in Parpola 2007: 157-78 and Collins 2014: 30-41.

⁸⁹ Malamoud 2002: 107-25. Compare the Vedic myth of Dadhyañc whose horse-head was replaced by the *Aśvins* after *Indra* severed it. This is also supported by archaeological evidence in *Sintashta* culture (above n. 84) with a burial of a man whose head is replaced by a horse head (Witzel 1998: 4).

⁹⁰ *SSS* 16.10.1.

⁹¹ The story of *Śunaḥśepa* (pp. 205), see Heesterman 1957: 158-62.

⁹² 43.34.4.

This specific bit of trivia should give some pause to those who deplore Dio as an utterly unreliable source. Dio himself admits that he is puzzled by this type of ritual, although the model of the October Equus appears obvious to us. The men are sacrificed on the Campus Martius, and their severed heads taken to the Regia just like the head and tail of the October horse. The human sacrifice is set to replicate the horse sacrifice as in the Indian system. The whole affair will seem absurd to modern sensibilities, but we often tend to forget that Republican Rome was quite a different world. Parker argues that human sacrifice (in all but the name) is amply attested in times of Republican crises as foreigners and Vestal virgins were buried alive in periods of distress and anxiety.⁹³ The close correspondence between October Equus and the *ásvamedha* leaves little doubt that the two are derived from an Indo-European horse sacrifice. Both systems also entertain the offering of a human modelled on horse sacrifice. As *pontifex maximus*, Caesar would have known about the potential benefits of these ancient rites. The real question is why would he *not* try to make use of it. Even if he was sceptical about the tradition, the advantages far outweigh any potential disadvantage. To a man who was responsible for the death of countless thousands, the lives of two rebellious soldiers counted for next to nothing. If any kind of power (royal or otherwise) could be gained by performing the ritual, doing it would be a sound strategy.

The fact that the episode is not confirmed by any other ancient source could raise suspicions, but if we assume that it was fabricated, the potential slanderer would have to be extremely knowledgeable to model the ritual murder of the soldiers on the horse sacrifice. It would be an odd coincidence to confuse the two types in such a way that this corresponds to what we know of the Vedic sacrificial system. Caesar's supposed abhorrence at the report of Celtic human sacrifice would hardly be an

⁹³ H.N. Parker 2004: 563-601. Of course, the difference between Parker's cases and Caesar's soldiers is that the latter is openly called a ritual while in the former we may only infer it to be a scapegoat sacrifice (not recognised as such in Roman religion).

argument against the possibility. As most of his report, this is heavily biased in order to depict them as uncivilised barbarians.⁹⁴ A great part of Roman history presents us with problems of subjective perception and later reworking, which twist the facts of the events and weave them into mythical reports, but overlap of this sort reveals that we should be careful not to dismiss the improbable and incredible as impossible. If comparative mythology holds any heuristic value for ancient history, it is in this humbling lesson it has to offer us by way of salient religious parallels.

Another point of interest in this respect is the *Feriae Latinae*, an ancient sacrifice celebrated in the Alban hills, which the Christian sources claimed also involved a human sacrifice.⁹⁵ Caesar is reported to have celebrated the rite two times: in 49 BC (when rushing to civil war with Pompey), and in 44BC when he returned from the festival in an *ovatio*, and wearing the red boots of Alban kings.⁹⁶ However, very little is in fact known about the ritual, and siding with Christian sources who had their own agenda in accusing pagans of human sacrifice would be a case of reinforcing *obscurum per obscurius*. In fact, as Smith points out, the ritual was a requirement for Roman magistrates before setting out on military operations: it thus carried weight as a unifying factor and reinforced the role of the celebrant as commander.⁹⁷

In this section we have seen that the Lupercalia presents strong elements of ritual antagonism that is a part of its Indo-European heritage. The clear contrast between the flamen and the Luperci is paralleled by the Indian opposition of the brahmin and the vrātyas, which most likely reflects a conflict between priests and warriors on a sacrificial level. The Indian royal rituals of *aśvamedha* and *rājasūya* are also characterised by agonistic components. The former is paralleled by the Roman October horse sacrifice, while the latter seems to share conceptual elements with the

⁹⁴ *BG.* 6.16, as many have pointed out, e.g. Wells 1999: 59-60.

⁹⁵ See Rives 1995: 74-7 for discussion and references.

⁹⁶ As we have seen on p. 101.

⁹⁷ C.J. Smith 2012: 267-88.

Lupercalia. The early suppression of royalty in Rome makes it very difficult to draw definitive conclusions, but my revision of Dumézil's thesis on Caesar's use of the Lupercalia reveals an interesting link between the conception of human sacrifice in Rome and India. This last chapter of the section appropriately underlines the potential usefulness of comparative studies, but also its limits. The parallels between flamen and brahmin make common heritage obvious and almost undeniable. But their opposition to the Luperci and the vrātyas reveal an ancient Indo-European system for which we can offer little by way of explanation. Judging by rituals that are mostly easily paralleled (such as the horse sacrifice), obscenity and competitive antagonism formed an essential component of this ancient religion. The myths and rituals of the Lupercalia derive from this same matrix that continued to persist for centuries after Indo-European speakers brought it from the distant Eurasian steppes.

Conclusion

*Sed nos immensum spatiis confecimus aequor:*¹ we have traversed a vast space indeed. I have attempted a discussion of the Lupercalia that involves the periods of the Roman Republic and Empire, but also its prehistory and its survival after the end of the Western Empire. There is no doubt that the festival assumed a different form in late Antiquity. We have noted the possibility of other sporadic changes along the way, but there was never enough evidence to argue for a substantial reform. The scarcity of the source material prevents our positing clear-cut stages and tracking the changes as they happened. Nevertheless, given the vast stretch of time under consideration one should at least attempt to give a sketch of the sequence of events. I have thus decided to give this thesis a narrative conclusion:² rather than simply summarising what the reader has already seen, I will give a version of the story of the Lupercalia, as I think it happened.

Some time in the 2nd millennium BC, speakers of Indo-European languages settled in the Apennine peninsula. They spoke dialects of Indo-European that belonged to its Italic branch, which will develop into what we know as the Umbrian, Oscan, Faliscan and Latin of historical times. They came with their own worldview, myths and rituals transmitted from generation to generation from their ancestors in the Eurasian steppes. Initiation rituals were an integral part of this heritage and played a key role in their society as they do in all pre-modern cultures. They continued to initiate a number of their young men in the ways of the warrior, which required a symbolic identification with the wolf, a predator famed for its ferocity and for cattle raiding. They inscribed the old myths and rituals into the new landscape.

¹ Verg. *G.* 2.541.

² For a similar device, see the conclusion of Heyworth's article on Propertius and politics (2007b: 127-8).

The largest river in central Italy was the Tiber. It had a river island that provided an ideal crossing for men and cattle. This made it a key strategic location for a settlement and a base for trade with the Etruscans to the north (who spoke a non-Indo-European language) and Greek colonists to the south (who spoke a different form of it). Close by the island, there was a defensible hill, at the foot of which the settlers found a cave, which they recognised as the place from their foundation myth: this is where the mighty warrior killed the fiery beast. The old warrior gods were still important in these new and hostile surroundings. One of them was a wild god of the forests, fields and cattle, whom their ancestors called both Savage and Kind. The mysterious cave was also the place where the Savage god resided, and where the youths came to revere him in seclusion for the ritual of initiation.

Facing the sacrificial blood of death (and the milk of a new mode of life), boys turned into men, and the ritual imbued them with new power, which they passed onto women, at the same time encircling and protecting the whole community. At the turn of the year, this obscene ritual renewed time and purified space. An ancient injunction demanded that a sombre priest attend the chaotic celebration. He was bound by taboos that were structured in stark contrast to the activities of the playful youths. But the totality of space and time could not be achieved without this dialogue of opposites.

Centuries passed and times changed, but the old rituals were not forgotten. The priests were now recruited from various social ranks, and religious systematisation made the Luperci one of the priestly colleges. The popularity of the festival made it a good stage for political purposes. At the height of a constitutional crisis, a bold dictator staged a coronation in which he refused to be called king. The audience at the festival grew proportionately to Rome's population, which called for increased organisation that made it more dramatic in late Antiquity. When Christianity began changing the landscape of Rome, it did away with many old rituals,

but the Lupercalia would not go easily. It was too popular to simply disappear. Actors continued to reenact the chaotic procession, while the people enjoyed a carnivalesque festivity with satirical songs about the bigwigs.

This story is partly speculative, and not all readers will agree with it. Gaps in our reports on the long-lasting festival prevent us from ever verifying it with certainty. However, I do hope that this work has managed to demonstrate that many of the established theories on the Lupercalia (e.g. Holleman's or Wiseman's) are less likely to stand up to scrutiny than a comparative approach to the subject. Not many classicists are willing to take up a comparative study nowadays. Engaging with other disciplines, and reading sources other than Greek and Latin is certainly not an easy task in an age of increasing specialisation. I cannot say how well I have managed it, but I do hope to have shown that, when it comes to Roman religion, it pays to go beyond the boundaries of the discipline.

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(abbreviations follow the format of *L'Année philologique*)

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