

## III.—The Topography and Interpretation of the Lupercalia

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The existence of the Lupercalia is amply attested by ancient evidence. Its interpretation, however, has been the subject of much discussion among modern scholars who, over the past hundred years, have propounded a series of very divergent theories as to its origin and purpose.<sup>1</sup> One would hesitate to add to the literature on the subject, were it not that most of this discussion has been much influenced by an hypothesis which has come to be accepted as a fact. For about eighty years almost no one, except perhaps Mommsen, seems to have doubted the suggestion that at the Lupercalia the Luperci ran around the Palatine hill. From this supposed detail in the ritual have developed various theories as to the purpose of the ceremonies. It has also been used as a significant fact in the study of the growth of Rome, as giving the boundaries of the original settlement. One may therefore be pardoned for scrutinising at

<sup>1</sup> For various modern discussions of the Lupercalia, see, among others too numerous to mention: Mitscherlich, *Lupercalium origo et ritus* (Göttingen 1822); Preller, *Römische Mythologie* (Berlin 1858) 335–45, (Berlin 1881, ed. Jordan) 1.379–92; Marquardt-Wissowa, *Römische Staatsverwaltung* (Leipzig 1885) 3.438–46; Unger, "Die Lupercalien," *RhM* 36 (1881) 50–86; Mannhardt, "Mythologische Forschungen," *Quellen und Forschungen* 51 (1884) 72–155; Pascal, C., "Le divinità infere e i Lupercali," *Rendiconti d. R. Acc. d. Lincei*, serie 5, 4 (1895) 138–56; Warde Fowler, *Roman Festivals* 310–21; Deubner, "Lupercalia," *ArchRW* 13 (1910) 481–508; Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*<sup>2</sup> (Munich 1912) 208–10; Otto, s.v. "Faunus," *RE* 6.2.2062–69; Marbach, s.vv. "Lupercalia" and "Lupercus," *RE* 13.2.1816–39; Franklin, A. M., *The Lupercalia* (New York 1921); Dumézil, G., *Le Problème des Centaures* (Paris 1929) 197–222; Frazer, *Fasts of Ovid* (London 1929) 2.327–89; Rose, H. J., "De Lupis Lupercis Lupercalibus," *Mnemosyne* 60 (1932–33) 385–402; Aly, Wolf, "Über das Wesen römischen Religiosität," *ArchRW* 33 (1936) 68–69; Altheim, F., *History of Roman Religion* (London 1938) 132, 206–17, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* 1 (Baden-Baden 1951) 131–47; Kerenyi, K., "Wolf und Ziege im Lupercalienfeste," in *Niobe: Neue Studien über antike Religion und Humanität* (Zurich 1949) 136–47; Rose, H. J., "Two Notes on Roman Religion," *Latomus* 8 (1949) 9–14; Lambrechts, P., "Les Lupercales, une fête pré-deïste?" *Collection Latomus* 2 (Bruxelles 1949) 167–76. G. Dumézil has also discussed the Luperci in his *Mitra-Varuna* (Paris 1940, 2nd ed. 1948) and in his numerous subsequent books on Roman religion, but he has not dealt in any detail with the Lupercalia itself. His emphasis has been on the mythological aspects of the Luperci rather than on their ritual, and the broad scope of his discussion has led him to pass over some significant details. As a result his very interesting interpretation of the Luperci does not shed much light on the actual festival and its meaning.

some length the evidence on which this hypothesis was originally proposed, and the process by which it came to be accepted. If as a result of this scrutiny the hypothesis is shown to be unjustified, it will obviously be desirable to reconsider the interpretation of the Lupercalia as to its origin and its purpose. In this paper I propose to show that the hypothesis is not justified by the evidence, to present the evidence for a different route taken by the Luperci, and to reconsider the interpretation of the Lupercalia in the light of these results.

## I

More than twenty ancient authors refer to the Lupercalia. In spite of the fact that nearly all of them refer to the running of the Luperci, and many of them comment on their behavior while running, not one author states that they ran around the Palatine hill.<sup>2</sup> One cannot help wondering why there should have been such a conspiracy of silence about what would have been a very striking feature of the ceremony. The idea that the Luperci did circle the Palatine hill was first propounded by Preller in 1858, in a discussion of the cult of Faunus.<sup>3</sup> He based it primarily on a passage in Varro (*L.L.* 6.34) which he rightly characterised as "leider nicht in allen Punkten verständlich," and supported it by reference to certain phrases in Dionysius (*Ant. Rom.* 1.80) and Plutarch (*Rom.* 21). The obscurity of this passage in Varro has laid it open to a variety of interpretations and, before we discuss them, it may be well to look at it in its context. Having completed his discussion of the names of festivals Varro takes up the names of months. Of February he says: "ab diis inferis Februarius appellatus, quod tum his paren(te)tur; ego magis arbitror Februarium a die februato, quod tum februatur populus, id est lupercis nudis lustratur antiquum oppidum Palatinum gregibus humanis cinctum." He is, then, explaining the word Februarius as derived from *dies februatus*, an alternative name for the Lupercalia, and is emphasizing the purificatory nature of the ritual. The last words, *id est* — *cinctum* are an expansion and explanation of *februatur*

<sup>2</sup> The following passages refer to the running of the Luperci: Ovid, *Fasti* 2.267–452; Varro *ap.* Augustine, *C.D.* 18.12; Livy 1.5.1–2; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.80; Appian, *B.C.* 2.109; Plut. *Rom.* 21, *Caesar* 61, *Ant.* 12, *Q.R.* 68; Suet. *Aug.* 31.4; Servius *ad Aen.* 8.343; Tert. *De Spec.* 5; Minucius Felix 22.8; Aurelius Victor 22.1; Paulus 49 ed. Lindsay; Justin 43.1.7; Prudentius, *Contra Symm.* 2.863, *Peristeph.* 10.162–65.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* (above, note 1) 344 f. Jordan in his edition left Preller's text unaltered, but added to the notes.

*populus*. *Lupercis nudis lustratur* corresponds to *februatur*, *anti-quum oppidum Palatinum* corresponds to *populus*. The obscure phrase, *gregibus humanis cinctum*, must supply further detail. Since *cinctum* is a past participle modifying *oppidum*, it should, strictly speaking, describe some condition of the town which began prior to the action of the main verb *lustratur*, and thus supply additional information as to the time or circumstances of the main action, or the reason for it.

The train of thought which seems to have led Preller to give such importance to this passage is interesting.<sup>4</sup> He regarded the Lupercalia as a festival of Faunus, under the title of Lupercus which he interpreted as "Wolfsabwehrer in der nächster Bedeutung als Beschützer der Heerde, in der entfernteren als Austreiber des Winters durch die Erneuerung des Jahres im Frühlinge." For Preller Faunus was closely related to Mars and his group, who are divinities of spring and fertility. Since their worship is characterised by purificatory rites carried out by means of ritual processions of expiatory offerings around a place or group of people, it followed that such a rite should occur in the Lupercalia too. The evidence for the rite is not to be found in any other ancient passage dealing with the Lupercalia, but Preller discovered it in Varro by assuming that in the phrase *oppidum . . . gregibus humanis cinctum*, *cingere* could be understood as the equivalent of *circuire*, and thus refer to a procession *around* the town. The necessary expiatory victims he found represented by the *greges humani*, citing as analogy for this meaning the words of Paulus (91 L.): "humanum sacrificium dicebant quod mortui causa fiebat." His whole theory he supported by reference to Dionysius' words περιελθεῖν δρόμῳ τὴν κώμην (*Ant. Rom.* 1.80), which will be discussed later. All the other ancient references to the running of the Luperci, none of which refer to a circuit of the Palatine, he interpreted as describing a general running to and fro up and down the Sacra Via and through the Forum, an element in the ritual which he called the *discursus*, presumably because the authors often use this word or *discurrere* in reference to the Luperci.

To some one who is not already convinced, as Preller was, that the Lupercalia, as a *februatio*, must have included a procession of victims around something, there are difficulties in the way of his

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 335-45, 370-74.

theory. In the first place he states explicitly that the circuit of the Palatine took place *after* the sacrifice at the Lupercal, but a purificatory circuit of this type normally includes the victims and *precedes* their sacrifice, as his discussion of these rites makes clear.<sup>5</sup> There is, however, no reference in the evidence to a second sacrifice, so we must assume that the victims were already dead when the Luperci began to run. In the second place, Preller's whole theory rests upon his assumption that *cingere* is synonymous with *circuire*. A study of the examples given for the former in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* shows clearly that this is not so. *Cingere* does not mean "to move around" something, but "to enclose" or "to encircle" one thing with another, as for instance to enclose a city with walls or to gird oneself with a belt.<sup>6</sup> The surrounding which it describes is a static situation, which may be the result of action, but is not the action itself. *Cingere* is, for instance, commonly used to describe the besieging of a city. If Varro had been referring in this passage to a procession moving around the town he would not have used *cingere* but something like *ambire* or *circumire*, as he does in the case of the Armilustrum (*L.L.* 5.153; 6.22).<sup>7</sup>

It may have been an unconscious recognition of this semantic difficulty which led Mommsen in 1863 to emend the text of Varro to read *oppidum a regibus moenibus cinctum*, on the basis of the statement made about the name of February in the *Fasti Silvii*: "dicitur a febro verbo, quod purgamentum veteres nominabant, quia tum Romae moenia lustrabantur" (*CIL* I.364, 386). He described the Lupercalia as *Ferias lustrandorum moenium urbis Palatinae causa*, an interpretation in which he has not been followed, and indeed the ceremony referred to in the *Fasti Silvii* would seem more like the Terminalia than the Lupercalia.

It was, however, not Preller, but Jordan and his followers who gave the hypothesis of a circuit of the Palatine its present character as an accepted fact. When he wrote his discussion of the Argei,

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 370-74.

<sup>6</sup> In five columns of the *Thesaurus*, only two examples are cited as possible equivalents of *circumire*. This passage is not one of them.

<sup>7</sup> The verb *lustrare* is sometimes used to mean "go around," but this appears to be a derived meaning. Varro does not himself seem to consider it an important element in the word, for he derives *lustrum* from *luo* (*L.L.* 6.11). In 6.34 he is obviously using it in its primary meaning, "to purify," as a synonym for *februare*. It is interesting to note that in the definitions of *Armilustrum* in 5.153 and 6.22 he refers to the *ambitus* but associates it with the first part of the word, not the second. Preller does not, apparently, rest his argument at all on the derived meaning of *lustrare* but only on *cingere*, although he seems to think that an *ambitus* is a necessary part of a *lustratio*.

Jordan had accepted Schwegler's theory that Tacitus must have derived his description of the Romulean pomerium which circled the Palatine from an unidentified religious source. He therefore took up the part of Preller's hypothesis which seemed to provide such a source, and identified the supposed course of the Luperci with Tacitus' pomerium.<sup>8</sup> Jordan at this point in his work had no interest in the festival itself, and having found the piece of evidence he was looking for either altered or discarded all the rest of Preller's theory. He ignored Preller's *discursus* of the Luperci in the other parts of the city, and consequently this has almost completely dropped out of the literature. He also ignored the part played by the expiatory victims, which was essential to Preller's statement, and identified the *greges humani* as the Luperci themselves, explaining the phrase by pointing out that the Luperci wore girdles made of goat skin. A few years later, also in a discussion of the pomerium, Mommsen remarked that Jordan's identification of the *greges humani* with the Luperci was impossible, partly on the rather weak argument that Varro would not have referred to the Luperci in so scurrilous a manner, and more cogently that he would not have said "dass die von den Luperken umstandene Stadt von den Luperken lustrirt ward."<sup>9</sup> I take this to mean that Mommsen regarded the double reference to the Luperci as tautological. Jordan rejected the imputation of scurrility, ignored the second objection, and maintained his ground.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Topographie der Stadt Rom* 2 (Berlin 1871) 269.

<sup>9</sup> "Der Begriff des Pomerium," *Hermes* 10 (1876) 49 (reprinted in *Römische Forschungen* 2 [Berlin 1879] 22-41). It is interesting that in this paper he added the word *Romanis* to his emendation of Varro.

<sup>10</sup> *Topographie* 1.1 (Berlin 1878) 162 f., note 19. He appears however to have changed his mind later, for in his edition of Preller's *Römische Mythologie* he remarks: "die Luperci sind während die Ceremonie Wölfe" (vol. 1 [Berlin 1881] 389, note 4). Unger (above, note 1) 56 carried the identification with the *greges humani* a step further when he said that the Luperci in their goat skins circling the Palatine correspond to the sacrificial victims which at the lustrum were driven three times around the army, "wie Varro ausdrücklich angibt". It would be difficult to find in Roman ritual a parallel for an officiating priest enacting the part of the sacrificial victim. We may also note again that at the Lupercalia the victim had already been sacrificed before the running takes place, and it is his skin in the hands of the Luperci, not around their waists, which our ancient authorities regarded as the efficacious means of purification. Neither Jordan nor Unger supported their identification of the *greges humani* with the Luperci by referring, as Wissowa did later (*R.K.*<sup>2</sup> 500), to Paulus' statement (49 L.) that the Luperci were known as *creppi*, a word interpreted as meaning "goats" on the basis of Paulus' remark that *caprae* used to be called *crepae* (42 L.). If this interpretation is correct, it was certainly not well known in antiquity, for Paulus explains the name from *crepitu pellicularum*, not from *capri*.

Marquardt and Wissowa followed Jordan,<sup>11</sup> and the combined authority of these scholars has brought about the general acceptance of his theory. Kent, however, in his translation of the *De Lingua Latina* (Cambridge 1938) suggests another possible translation of the crucial passage. He renders it: "the old Palatine town girt with flocks of *people* is passed around by the naked Luperci." It has been suggested to me, although I have never seen it in print, that the *greges* were the people waiting to be purified and that as they would stand where they expected the Luperci to pass, their position would indicate the course of the runners.

Scholarly discussion of the Lupercalia has now arrived at a curious situation. Preller was led to suggest the circuit of the Palatine by his belief that a purification must include a procession of expiatory victims, and he based his hypothesis on the identification of *cingere* with *circuire*. Jordan destroyed Preller's picture of the procession when he identified the *greges* with the Luperci. Kent, perhaps unconsciously, exploded both Preller's and Jordan's theories when he correctly rendered *cinctum* as "girt," for in the first place this implies a static situation and in the second it follows logically that the *greges* by whom the town has already been girt cannot be the Luperci who are moving rapidly. He found the evidence for a processional circuit in the verb *lustratur*, to which Preller had paid no attention. Thus we find that the whole foundation of Preller's theory has been knocked out from underneath it, while his conclusion, which is still generally accepted, floats as it were in mid-air, without its old support, and with no new evidence to prop it up.

The fore-going discussion has, I hope, shown that there is no reason to assume that the phrase *gregibus humanis cinctum* describes a circuit of the Palatine made by either victims or the Luperci. One is however left with some natural curiosity as to just what Varro did mean by *gregibus humanis*. Can they be the crowds of onlookers, as has been suggested? The natural word to use here would be *turba*, not *grex*. The latter, while it is commonly used of human beings, means not a crowd, but a group of people with interests or characteristics which unite them. This unifying element is normally expressed by a substantive in the genitive (e.g. *grex amicorum*, *grex Epicuri*) or by an adjective.<sup>12</sup> Thus the clue to the

<sup>11</sup> Marquardt-Wissowa (above, note 1) 444 f.; Wissowa (above, note 1) 209.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *ThLL* s.v. "grex."

nature of this particular group must lie in the adjective *humanus*. But it is surely redundant to tell the reader that a crowd is composed of human beings. The only point of the phrase, if we assume that it refers to the onlookers, would be to suggest that the flocks are really humans acting as animals. But there is nothing anywhere in the evidence that suggests that at this time the crowds were doing anything of the sort. Moreover, the structure of the sentence suggests, although it does not require, that the *oppidum* is being purified because it is *cinctum gregibus humanis*. This situation could not be explained by assuming that the *grege*s were simply the crowd of onlookers. This conclusion, however, indicates that the interpretation of the phrase belongs rightly with the interpretation of the festival as a whole. Further discussion of the point will therefore best be left to a later part of this paper.

Among all the references to the Lupercalia in the ancient authors there is only one phrase which is regularly cited to support Preller's theory of a circuit of the Palatine. Dionysius tells us: *χρῆν τοὺς περὶ τὸ Παλλάντιον οἰκοῦντας τῶν νέων ἐκ τοῦ Λυκαίου τεθυκότας περιελθεῖν δρόμῳ τὴν κώμην γυμνοῦς* (*Ant. Rom.* 1.80).

Preller, Jordan and those who have followed them seem to assume that the village to which Dionysius here refers is the settlement which Romulus founded on the Palatine and that therefore any one who circled it would automatically circle the hill. But if one reads Dionysius' story one sees that this is not the case. He is here describing rites performed in a *κώμη* which antedates the founding of Rome by Romulus. Dionysius always carefully describes the later city of Romulus as *πόλις*, never as *κώμη*. The village in question was, according to Dionysius, originally founded by Evander, and the *κωμῆται*, referred to in the next sentence as being purified by the running of the Luperci, are not the inhabitants of the as yet unfounded city on the hill, but the successors of Evander and his Arcadians. Now it is quite improbable that a village of Evander ever existed, but for our purpose this is irrelevant. Dionysius believed that it existed and located the route of the Luperci in it. Therefore if we wish to know where the Luperci ran, we must know where Dionysius believed the village of Evander to have been located. Luckily for us, there is no doubt on this subject. In at least six passages, including the one in question, Dionysius explicitly locates the village

at the foot of or near the Palatine hill, not on its heights.<sup>13</sup> Just where, below the hill, he placed it, is not clear, but it must have been near the Lupercal. Unless then Dionysius conceived of Pallanteum as extending completely around the base of the hill, *περιελθεῖν δρόμῳ τὴν κώμην* does not imply a circuit of the Palatine.

<sup>13</sup> *Ant. Rom.* 1.31.32.80.84.89; 2.1. The prepositions which in these passages indicate the relation of the settlement to the hill are *ὑπό*, *περί* and *πρός*. It would seem to me contrary to Greek usage to render any of these as "on the hill," and none of them are so rendered by Cary in his translation of Dionysius in the Loeb Library. The village of Evander is often referred to, and by writers of the post-Augustan period it is located on the Palatine hill, in disagreement with Dionysius' statement, which is the only specific location given for it in earlier literature. It seems probable that the tradition changed in the imperial period as a result first of the fact that the village was commonly known by the same name as the hill, and secondly of the increased importance of the hill as the residence of the Emperors. Although no other Augustan writer gives us any specific data, Dionysius' location is the only one which makes sense of Vergil's description of Aeneas' walk with Evander to his home (*Aen.* 8.306-69). They come from the Ara Maxima past the Porta Carmentalis and the Lupercal, look at the Asylum and the Argiletum, the Tarpeian rock and the whole Capitoline Hill. While Evander comments on the latter they are going up (*subibant*) to Evander's house, looking as they go at the cattle in the Forum and on the Carinae. (I do not know why Warde Fowler [*Aeneas at the Site of Rome*, Oxford 1918, 74] says that they could not have seen the herds on the Carinae until they reached the northwest side of the Palatine just above the summa Sacra Via. That the Carinae was considered very close to the Forum is shown by Horace, *Ep.* 1.7.48-49:

dum redit atque foro nimum distare Carinas  
iam grandis natu queritur.)

When they arrive at the house Evander calls it *regia*. There is no reference to an ascent of the Palatine itself nor to any of the sights which might have been seen from there, and no reference to the descendant of Aeneas who in Vergil's day had given new glory to the Palatine. In view of the way in which Vergil emphasizes the future development of the site throughout Aeneas' stay in Pallanteum, this would be a very striking omission if he had visualized Evander as living on the top of the Palatine. It seems more probable that like Dionysius he locates the village at the foot of the hill, and identifies Evander's house with the Regia. The word *subibant* would well describe the walk to this spot up the slope from the west end of the Forum valley. In two other places Vergil refers to the site of Pallanteum. Both present slight difficulties which are improved by accepting Dionysius' location. In 8.53 the Arcadians are said to have founded their city *in montibus*, but they are never associated with any hill but the Palatine. Servius Dan. (*ad loc.*) suggested "an 'pro monte' an 'inter montes'?" In 9.244 Nisus says "vidimus obscuris primam sub vallibus urbem." Although the interlocking word order indicates that *sub vallibus* refers to the city, commentators from Servius on have said that it must refer to the subject of *vidimus* because the city was on the hill. But if Vergil agreed with Dionysius, this difficulty disappears. As far as I know the only other possible reference in Augustan literature to Evander having lived on the hill is in a passage in Livy (1.5) which presents considerable textual difficulty, and has been emended by Bayet on textual grounds in such a way that the reference drops out (Bayet-Baillet, *Tite-Live, Histoire Romaine* [Paris 1940] *loc. cit.*).



A second reason why Dionysius' phrase should not be used to support Preller's theory is that, taken by itself, it is, like the passage in Varro, ambiguous in meaning. Two ambiguities cannot combine to produce one fact. The verb *περιελθεῖν* used without an object, or when the object is a large area rather than a thing or person, commonly means "to run to and fro."<sup>14</sup> An excellent illustration, closely parallel to Dionysius' words, is to be found in Andocides: *καὶ σὺ ζῆς καὶ περιέρχῃ τὴν πόλιν ταύτην* (1.99). Here the verb obviously means "to move about within the city," not "to run in circles around it." When a circular motion within a large area is implied, an adverbial expression is required to clarify the meaning. Demosthenes (19.225) and Aristophanes (*Plutus* 679), for instance, add *κύκλῳ* to *περιελθεῖν*, as is also often done in the case of *περιθεῖν* and *περιτρέχειν*. Since then there is reason to translate Dionysius' words "to run about within the village" rather than "to run in a circle around it," we must decide how to render the phrase not simply from its own context, but by comparing it with the expressions used to describe the running of the Luperci by other authors, many of whom must actually have seen the ceremony. Among the Greek writers, Appian uses *διαθεῖν*, which is also the favorite word of Plutarch who uses it six times in this connection.<sup>15</sup> The latter also uses, apparently as synonymous with *διαθεῖν*, *περιθεῖν*, *θεῖν δρόμον*, *τρέχειν*, *περιτρέχειν*, *ἐλθεῖν δρόμῳ* and the phrase *διαθεῖν ἀνὰ τὴν πόλιν*. The verbs compounded with *περί* are subject to the same variations in meaning as *περιελθεῖν*. Plutarch also uses the nouns *δρόμος* and *περιδρομή* without reference to an object. Like the verbs, the latter noun, although often used of circular motion, can be used otherwise, and, without qualification, often means a right-about-face. Plutarch uses it in this sense of the action of soldiers who have broken through an opposing rank and wheeled to attack it from the rear (*Aem.* 20), while Xenophon uses it to describe a wild boar who turns suddenly and charges the man behind him (*Cyn.* 10.11). Since Plutarch's preferred verb, *διαθεῖν*, especially when followed by *ἀνὰ τὴν πόλιν*, must mean "to run to and fro" not "to run in a circle," and those words compounded with *περί* which he uses synonymously

<sup>14</sup> This and the following statements as to the meaning of the Greek words involved may be verified by the examples cited in *LSJ*. In his translation for the Loeb edition (*Plutarch's Lives* [London and New York 1914]) 1.157, Perrin has translated *περιδρομή* (*Rom.* 21) as "course around the city" but the Greek text contains no reference to the route of the course, and as far as I know no earlier translation rendered it in this way.

<sup>15</sup> For the examples cited in this paragraph, see the references in note 2, above.

may be so rendered, the usage of the Greek authors is good evidence that Dionysius also intended his words to mean "to run to and fro" about the village, not "to circle" it. The evidence of the Latin authors is even clearer, since not one of them uses a word or phrase which could possibly require the latter translation. Ovid, Livy, Servius and Prudentius use simply *currere*, Paulus, Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Aurelius Victor, and Prudentius use either *discurrere* or *discursus*, Justin uses *decurrere*, and Prudentius *kursito*.

The fact that none of these authors describes a circuit of the Palatine becomes even stronger evidence against Preller's theory when one considers the context of some of their references. Ovid, for example, devotes more than two hundred lines to the Lupercalia, and gives four distinct explanations of why the Luperci ran, and of why they ran naked, without any suggestion that they ran a fixed course. Other authors tell similar aetiological stories, describing how Romulus and Remus, before the foundation of Rome, ran to the hill, or the Lupercal, or away from them, but never around the hill.<sup>16</sup> Surely at least one of these tales would explain so striking a feature of the ceremony, if it really took place. Most important of all, perhaps, is the silence of Plutarch who gives us our only systematic description of the ritual.

## II

So far this discussion has been dedicated to the ungrateful task of destroying a long accepted hypothesis. Such iconoclasm should be atoned for by the presentation of some concrete alternative. Curiously enough Preller himself provided the clue to the probable answer to the question of where the Luperci ran when he included in the evidence for the *discursus* a passage from Augustine which has either received little attention from later writers, or has been rejected as an error. Since, however, this passage is almost certainly derived from Varro,<sup>17</sup> it deserves serious consideration. In Book 18 of the *De Civitate Dei* Augustine treats the events of pagan history from the reign of Ninus the Assyrian to the expulsion of the Tarquins, following the chronological system given by Varro in the *De Gente Populi Romani*. When he comes to the period after the flood

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Aelius Tubero quoted by Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.80; Butas and Acilius quoted by Plutarch, *Rom.* 21; Val. Max. 2.2.9; Ovid, *Fasti* 2.359-80.

<sup>17</sup> Frick, C., *Die Quellen Augustin's im XVIII Buche seiner Schrifte De Civitate Dei* (Hoxter 1886); Taylor, L. R., "Varro's *De Gente Populi Romani*," *CP* 29 (1934) 221-29.

of Deucalion he tells us: "per haec tempora . . . 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" (*De Civ. Dei* 18.12). Since Varro is the source for much of Book 18, and is specifically cited as the source for another statement about the Luperci in chapter 17, it is reasonable to assume that he is ultimately responsible for this picture of the Luperci running first up and then down the slope of the Sacra Via. We may note that if this action took place on the Forum side of the Velia it would be well described in the words of Plutarch as a *περιδρομή*, or right-about-face. The emphasis which Varro here places on the *ascensus* and *descensus* of the Sacra Via seems to me to make it impossible to interpret his words, as Preller and others have done, as representing the Luperci running up one side of the Velia and down the other in their circuit of the Palatine.<sup>17a</sup> If this had been the case the importance of ascent and descent would have been lost, and it is hardly probable that they could have been interpreted as a reminiscence of an escape from the flood.

What picture do we now have of the course of the Luperci? There can be no doubt that they started from the Lupercal. Dionysius says that originally they ran about the village which he locates at the foot of the Palatine, and Varro adds that they went up the Sacra Via and down again, that is to the *summa Sacra Via* and back. Other writers refer to their *discursus*, and give us a picture of them dodging back and forth among the crowds whom they hit as they

<sup>17a</sup> If it could be shown that the name Sacra Via was applied to the road which went down from the Velia towards the Coliseum, then Augustine's *ascensus* might be taken to refer to the route by which the Luperci came round the south-east end of the Palatine and up over the Velia to come down into the Forum. The only argument in favor of such a prolongation of the Sacra Via however is a remark of Varro's (*L.L.* 5.47) echoed by Festus (372 L.), which associates its *caput* with the *sacellum Streniae*, the location of which is not known but was somewhere near the Carinae. In the same passage, however, Varro says that the only part of the road popularly known as the Sacra Via was the slope facing one as one left the Forum. See the discussion in Platner-Ashby, *Topographical Dictionary*, s.v. "Sacra Via," 456 f. and cf. Säfslund, "Porta Mugonia and Sacra Via," *Corolla Archaeologica* (Lund 1932) 70 f., who thinks that the Sacra Via originally began at the Porta Mugonia and was so called because of its connection with the necropolis in the Forum.

ran. This apparently took place in the Forum area, between the Lupercal and the *summa Sacra Via*. Thus when Caesar, according to Plutarch's description of the most famous celebration of the Lupercalia (*Caes.* 61), sat on the rostra, he would have been in a position to watch the whole performance, instead of having to wait a considerable length of time for Antony to come back into sight after running some two kilometers around the Palatine.

We may note that not only is Augustine's quotation from Varro the only specific reference in the whole literature to the terminus of the course of the Luperci, but it is also the final and conclusive piece of evidence which destroys Preller's theory. If in the *De Gente Populi Romani* Varro describes the Luperci as running only up and down the Sacra Via, we can hardly insist that in the *De Lingua Latina* his ambiguous phrase implies a contradictory statement that they circled the Palatine. Thus Varro himself becomes the best witness against the distortion of his own words. The fact that he describes the Lupercalia as a purification of the *antiquum oppidum Palatinum* presents no difficulty, for the words are obviously used not in their literal sense but as a synonym for the *populus* which he regards as the real object of the purification. Even if the words were to be taken literally, a town may be purified by a ceremony performed in front of it as well as by a procession around it.

### III

Since Jordan, Marquardt and Wissowa popularised the idea that the Luperci circled the Palatine, all attempts to interpret the purpose and meaning of the festival have naturally been much influenced by this detail in the ritual. If the fore-going discussion has been successful in showing that this idea was incorrect, and in presenting a convincing argument for another course, it becomes necessary to reconsider the whole Lupercalia from a new angle, and to see if we can thus arrive at some interpretation which will make a coherent whole of the data provided by the date, name, location, and ritual of the festival.

We may safely begin with one assumption upon which ancient and modern authorities alike agree, the extreme antiquity of the Lupercalia.<sup>18</sup> Even if modern opinion would not agree that it

<sup>18</sup> Some authors would regard only the nucleus of the ritual as primitive, maintaining that other parts were later accretions. Cf. the studies of Deubner and Franklin cited in note 1.

preceded the foundation of the city (whenever that is dated) they would certainly accept a date in the earliest period of Roman settlement, and see in the festival a reflection of primitive conditions. We must therefore try to understand the origins of the Lupercalia in terms of the community which first occupied the site of Rome, not as it is interpreted for us by writers of a more sophisticated period. The community was not as yet an organised city state, but in all probability a group of peasants, "squatters" who had come to the neighbourhood of the Palatine, not with the idea of founding a city, but because the location offered well watered pasturage for their flocks, and a conveniently defended natural citadel to which they could retreat from the raids of their neighbors and from the depredations of the wild beasts which still prowled the Campagna, and lived in any convenient cave. They would have led a hand-to-mouth existence, and, if they were like other such groups, they would have been even more superstitious and afraid of the supernatural than their more educated, city dwelling descendants, which is saying a good deal. Their religious observances would have been designed to meet the immediate problems of survival in the face of dangers from man, beast, and supernatural powers.

Ancient and modern would also agree that the Lupercalia is essentially a purification, although modern writers tend more than the ancients to stress the promotion of fertility associated with some of the ritual.<sup>19</sup> We have then a festival of purification, the name of which indicates that it is associated with wolves, celebrated on February 15th, in the valley below the Palatine. We may begin by

<sup>19</sup> The idea that the Lupercalia was in some sense a fertility rite seems to have sprung from the fact that the Luperci as they ran hit those whom they met with strips of goat skin called "amica Junonis," and when the blows fell on women they were popularly supposed to promote conception. We are told (Ovid, *Fasti* 2.425-52; Servius *ad Aen.* 8.343; Livy, frag. 63, Weissenborn-Müller, IV. p. xv) that this rite was instituted by Romulus because of the sterility of the Sabine women, at the suggestion of an oracle of Juno Lucina. Since the Luperci hit men as well as women it seems improbable that female fertility was the original purpose of this rite, except in so far as purification is always a help towards fertility. It is more likely that this superstition grew up after, as we shall see, the original purpose of the Lupercalia had been forgotten, and stems from the wishful thinking of women which habitually attributes fructifying power to objects and ceremonies of a quite different nature. The name of the strips of goat skin indicates no connection between the Lupercalia and Juno Lucina, the goddess of child birth, but arises from the fact that the goat was especially sacred to Juno Sospita. The connection of Juno with the Lupercalia has been much over-emphasised, e.g. by Pascal and by Kerenyi (above, note 1). Cf. Deubner (above, note 1) 496 f.; Rose, *Latomus* 8 (1949) 11-13.

asking, of what malign influence is the community to be purified, how do wolves come into the picture, why should it occur at this season, and be celebrated in this place?

The answer to the first question is not far to seek. The date of the Lupercalia, on the 15th of February, falls on the third day of the *dies parentales*, the period when the dead were propitiated (Ovid, *Fasti* 2.533–70, Varro, *L.L.* 6.13, Paulus 75 L., Lydus, *De Mens.* 4.29, p. 87 W.). Even in later times during this period, while ghosts were abroad, marriages were forbidden and matrons kept to themselves, temples were closed, no fire burned on their altars, and magistrates laid aside their insignia. Any ritual of purification practiced during this period may reasonably be taken as originally protection from the influence of the dead. This association with the dead has been noted but not in general, I think, given its full importance until quite recently.<sup>20</sup> It explains the course of the Luperci which I have suggested, and derives new emphasis from it. If we think back to the early period in which the Lupercalia was probably first celebrated, we see that the main feature of the Forum valley through which the Luperci ran was then the Sepulcretum used by the communities living on the hills. The running would then mark the boundary between the realm of the living and the dead, and the purification given by the beating which the Luperci administered to those whom they met would free them from the influence of the dead.

The association with the dead may also explain a problem raised earlier in this paper, the identity of the *grege humani* referred to by Varro. Ovid in discussing the *dies parentales*, which began two days before the Lupercalia, tells us that during this period ghosts are wandering abroad:

nunc animae tenues et corpora functa sepulcris  
errant, nunc posito pascitur umbra cibo (*Fasti* 2.565–66).

He tells us that on one unfortunate occasion, when the *dies parentales* were not observed, the death rate increased sharply, and a horde of the dead rose from their graves and haunted the city:

perque vias urbis latosque ululasse per agros  
deformes animas, volgus inane, ferunt (*Fasti* 2.553–54).

<sup>20</sup> Except by Pascal (above, note 1). Cf. Altheim, *H.R.R.* (above, note 1) 132; Dumézil (above, note 1) 210 f.; Koch, *Der römische Juppiter* (Frankfurt 1937) 97–99; Otto (above, note 1) 2065; Lambrechts (above, note 1) 173 f.

Ovid's phrase *volgus inane* reminds us at once of Varro's *greges*. His description also makes clear the point of Varro's use of *cinctum* to describe the state of the community at the time of the Lupercalia, for if the dead, who are of course buried outside the city, are restrained from entering it during these days only by the proper ritual, it is scarcely even metaphorical to describe them as "besieging" the city, and this is a legitimate and common meaning for *cingere*. But is there any justification for translating the clue word *humanus* as "dead"? In ordinary usage one would certainly say "no." In a religious context, however, the word may perhaps be used in a strictly technical sense which has been lost in ordinary Latin but is logical in relation to its derivation. We find it used in a technical religious sense in a passage from Paulus, which was cited and similarly interpreted by Preller in the same connection: "humanum sacrificium dicebant quod mortui causa fiebat" (91 L.). Gellius also uses it technically when he says that a goat was sacrificed to Veiovis *ritu humano*.<sup>21</sup> Now *humanus* defines *homo*, which appears to be derived from a word meaning "earth," and to mean primarily a creature "of the earth" as distinguished from what is "of the sky."<sup>22</sup> Could *humanus* then not include what is under the earth, and like the Greek *χθόνιος*, refer to the underworld and the dead? Thus *ritu humano* would mean "by chthonic rite" (appropriately for the worship of Veiovis), *sacrificium humanum* would mean "a sacrifice performed for the dead," as Paulus says, and *grex humanus* could mean "a horde of the dead."<sup>23</sup> It is true that this meaning for *humanus* is very rare, but our knowledge of the technical vocabulary of Roman ritual is very limited, and we have here two other examples of this usage, which in other respects fits in perfectly with what we know of the Lupercalia.

How and why should wolves be associated with this festival? From time immemorial the wolf has figured largely in European thought as the embodiment of evil power and there are a host of

<sup>21</sup> It has been suggested that *ritu humano* means "in place of a human being" and indicates a substitute for human sacrifice. Wissowa rejects this idea ([above, note 1] 420, note 4) and indeed in other cases where such substitution is described a different phrase is used. Varro, *L.L.* 6.20: "Volcanalia a Volcano, quod ei tum feriae et quod eo die populus pro se in ignem animalia mittit." Festus (276 L.): "id genus pisciculorum vivorum datur ei deo pro animis humanis."

<sup>22</sup> Walde-Hofmann, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, s.v. "humanus"; cf. Ernout-Meillet, *Dictionnaire Etymologique de la Langue Latine*, s.v. "homo." The exact derivation of *humanus* appears to be uncertain.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Horace, *Carm.* 1.24.18.

superstitions connected with wolves in all periods.<sup>24</sup> It is a well known fact that both Greeks and Romans associated wolves with the underworld, as demons and as ghosts.<sup>25</sup> We may, however, ask why (in Roman cult) wolves should be associated with a festival of the dead at this time of the year and not at any other. To answer this let us turn for the moment from the field of religion and consider what part real wolves must have played in the life of the early settlers of Rome.

It is very probable that these early settlers on or near the Palatine had flesh and blood wolves as their neighbors, for even in the late Republic the beasts still sometimes came into the city. Roman legend associated the wolf with the foundation of the city. Elsewhere in Europe "wolf" is a common designation for the outlaw and it may be that the outlaw element which was traditionally present in the early population of Rome has something to do with the story of Romulus' and Remus' nurture by the wolf.<sup>26</sup> These stories are localized at the Lupercal which was, before it became built over, a large cave with a spring inside it (Dion. *Ant. Rom.* 1.79). Such a cave would be an ideal lair for a wolf, before too many humans settled in the neighborhood. Indeed Dionysius tells us that the wolf who suckled the twins retreated to the Lupercal when the shepherds came upon her (*ibid.*). When the first settlers took up permanent residence on the site of Rome, the superstitions connected with the wolf must already have been old and well known to them. What would be more natural than that, listening on a winter night to wolves howling around their settlement, they should fancy themselves surrounded by evil beasts and wolves loosed from the underworld? It would be entirely reasonable under such circumstances to devise a special rite designed to protect the community against the supernatural wolves. The exact period in which it would be practiced may be explained if we look at the habits of the

<sup>24</sup> See a series of articles by Peuckert, *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* 9.716–803.

<sup>25</sup> Keller, *Thiere des klassischen Altertums* (Innsbruck 1887) 170–75; Roscher, W. H. "Das von der Kynanthropie handelnde Fragment des Marcellus von Side," *Abhandl. der philol.-histor. Klasse der sächsischen Gesellschaft* 17 (1897) 50–62; Otto (above, note 1); Höfler, O., *Kultische Geheimbünde der Germanen* (Frankfurt am Main 1934) 1.43. For specific associations of this belief with the Lupercalia, see Otto (above, note 1), Altheim (above, note 1) 132, Lambrechts (above, note 1) 173 f.

<sup>26</sup> Przyłinski, J., "Les Confréries des Loups-garous," *RHR* 121 (1940) 132, has even suggested that Romulus and Remus were themselves "loups-garous," men-wolves, children of the wolf god.



real wolves. Wolves mate only once a year, during a short period the date of which varies according to latitude. In the neighborhood of Rome in antiquity the height of the mating period would probably have come early in February.<sup>27</sup> "During the mating season wolves that are not under severe persecution by man tend to become noisy—indulging in much 'nocturnal singing.'"<sup>28</sup> It may well be that this indicated to the frightened listeners that the power of the beast was the greatest at this period, which coincided with the season of the dead, and led to special precautions being taken against it then.

#### IV

We have now seen that the Lupercalia is in broad outline a festival intended to protect the community against the power of the dead manifesting themselves at this season in the form of wolves. Much of the ritual, as it is described chiefly by Plutarch (*Rom.* 21), fits into this picture. The sacrificial victims, goats and a puppy, are common expiatory offerings.<sup>29</sup> The nakedness of the Luperci, their

<sup>27</sup> This statement is based on information kindly supplied by F. A. Ulmer, Jr., Curator of Mammals at the Philadelphia Zoological Gardens, who states in a letter: "Wolves of the species *Canis Lupus* (typical European brown wolf and the American timber wolf) do not all mate at the same time. Those in more southern climes mate earlier than do those in the Far North. Wolves in Michigan mate in late January and early February; those in Alaska do not mate until early March. Here at the Philadelphia Zoo our wolves mate very early—from January 10th to February 1st. The height of the mating season seems to be in late January. Due to this wide variation in the mating times of wolves, it is quite reasonable to believe that those in Central Italy might have mated between January 15th and February 15th." The following statement was obtained for me from Dr. Lamberto Crudi, the Direttore of the Giardino Zoologico under the Comune di Roma, through the kind offices of Prof. T. R. S. Broughton: "La informo che il lupo va in amore dai primi di dicembre alla metà di gennaio; i giovani trasportano il periodo di amore fino alla metà di febbraio." If, as seems probable, the climate of Italy was somewhat colder in the period when Rome was first being settled than it is now, the mating season would have been correspondingly later, but still near the end of winter. Cf. Säfllund, *Le Terremare* (Leipzig 1939) 221 f. and the climatic evidence cited by him. In the period before the Roman festivals were assigned to their fixed places in the calendar (Michels, "The 'Calendar of Numa' and the Pre-Julian Calendar," *TAPA* 80 [1949] 332–37) the Lupercalia would have been celebrated when the behavior of the local wolves gave the signal. Later when, as in the case of many other festivals, its functional character became less obvious (in this case because, as the city grew, the wolves were driven out, and the Romans had less contact with them), it would be celebrated every year in the same general period, together with other rites of purification.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted from the same letter from Mr. Ulmer.

<sup>29</sup> Otto, *RE* 6.2.2065. Cf. Quintilian 1.5.66 and Servius *ad Aen.* 8.343 who suggest *luere per caprum* as a possible derivation for *Lupercalia*. For the dog, cf. Plutarch, *Rom.* 21.7–8.

running, and their beating of those whom they meet are also recognised elements in ceremonies of purification.<sup>30</sup> One part of the ritual, however, mentioned only by Plutarch, is not so easy to place, and has given rise to much discussion. After the preliminary sacrifice of goats two youths, described as ἀπὸ γένους, were brought forward, their foreheads were touched with a bloody knife, and were then wiped with wool dipped in milk. After this they were required to laugh. Among other explanations of this peculiar incident it has been suggested that it was not part of the original ceremony, but a comparatively late addition, exemplifying death and rebirth.<sup>31</sup> This is of course possible, but it is interesting to ask whether there is not some explanation of this incident more closely connected with the original simpler idea behind the Lupercalia. Classical authors have offered us no immediate solution to the problem, but there is one source of information available to the modern scholar which was not so accessible to the ancients, the field of folk-lore. If we turn to this we find a vast collection of beliefs and superstitions, ancient and modern, about wolves. Although the classical world, like other European cultures, must have been full of superstitions of this type, unfortunately its sophisticated literature has preserved few of them. The few which we have are perhaps significant. We have seen that the wolf was associated with the underworld. Connected with this is the belief in the werewolf.<sup>32</sup> The most famous classical examples of werewolves, in a religious context, come from Arcadia, from the cults of Pan Lycaeus and Zeus Lycaeus. The latter cult was said to have been founded by a werewolf, Lycaon, and we are told that there was a particular family connected with the cult from which one member was regularly chosen to become a werewolf. Much of this information comes to us from Varro, quoted by Augustine.

<sup>30</sup> Heckenbach, J., *De nuditate sacra sacrisque vinculis* (Giessen 1911) especially pages 17–19; Mannhardt (above, note 1) 113–40; Reinach, "La Flagellation Rituelle" in *Cultes, Mythes et Religions* 1.172–83.

<sup>31</sup> See note 18.

<sup>32</sup> The promised article on this subject in the *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* has not yet appeared. See Black, G. F., "A List of Works Relating to Lycanthropy," *New York Public Library Bibliographies* 23 (1920); Hertz, W., *Der Werewolf* (Stuttgart 1862); Smith, K. F., "An Historical Study of the Werewolf in Literature," *Publ. Mod. Lang. Assoc.* 9 (1894) 1–42; MacCulloch, J. A., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* 7.206–20, s.v. "Lycanthropy"; Summers, M., *The Werewolf* (New York 1934), with a full bibliography; Frazer, J., *Golden Bough* 10 (London 1914) 308–14; Przylinski, J. (above, note 26) 128–45. Eckels, R. P., *Greek Wolf-Lore* (Philadelphia 1937) 32–48 has a brief discussion of the werewolf.

Since ancient opinion commonly associated the Lupercalia with Evander the Arcadian, it should be no surprise that Varro adds at the end of his remarks on the Arcadian werewolves: "Romanos etiam Lupercos ex illorum mysteriorum veluti semine exortos" (*De Civ. Dei* 18.17. Cf. Pliny, *H.N.* 8.81-82; Pausanias 8.2.6; Plato, *Rep.* 8.565D-E.). Even if we do not accept Varro's derivation of the Luperci from the Arcadian cults, with their werewolves, we must admit that he saw in them some common element upon which he based it.

The learned opinion of Varro is, however, not the only reason to associate the Lupercalia with werewolves. There is reason to suppose that popular opinion regarded February as the open season for werewolves. Marcellus of Side, in a clinical description of lycanthropy, says that in February this affection of the mind drives men to wander by night among tombs, imitating dogs and wolves.<sup>33</sup> Marcellus here treats lycanthropy as a disease, and does not suggest that the afflicted actually changed their shapes. But it seems legitimate to assume that such a mental disturbance would hardly occur except against the background of popular belief in the possibility of such a change. We may argue therefore that, if Marcellus records lycanthropy as being particularly prevalent in February, popular belief considered this a particularly appropriate season for the appearance of werewolves. It is perhaps unnecessary to point out that Marcellus associates his lycanthropes with tombs, just as Petronius does in his famous anecdote of the werewolf (*Sat.* 62), and that it was probably past the Sepulcretum that the Luperci ran.

But what, one may ask, has all this to do with the two youths whose foreheads were touched with a bloody knife? Among the innumerable superstitions connected with werewolves it is recorded that a man who has assumed the shape of a wolf can be forced to return to his true shape if he is struck three blows on the forehead with a knife, or is cut between the eyes until at least three drops of

<sup>33</sup> The text is given by Roscher (above, note 25), and in Galen, ed. Kuhn 19.719. Roscher associates the date which Marcellus gives for these outbreaks with the season of the dead, which occurs at the same time in both Greek and Roman religion (*op. cit.* 64). Eckels (above, note 32) 48 connects it with a possible dietary deficiency in late winter. He also states that Marcellus is attempting to describe "an ordinary neurosis, which had nothing to do, except in a remote and metaphorical sense, with folkloristic werewolfery," ignoring the implications of such a neurosis for the culture which it reflects.

blood are drawn.<sup>34</sup> This particular superstition is not recorded for the classical period, but it may well have existed then. At least, in classical stories of werewolves wounds have the same effect. I would suggest that the two young men were originally supposed to be victims of the supernatural wolves, and sufferers from lycanthropy, who were cured by the application of the knife, which in the original form of the ritual may have actually drawn blood. The application of the wool and milk, both of which often occur in rites of purification, as does the act of wiping, would complete their redemption.<sup>35</sup>

The laugh required of the youths after the blood was removed may also be associated with another piece of wolf lore. It is agreed by several ancient authors that a man becomes dumb if a wolf looks at him before he sees it.<sup>36</sup> May not the laugh then be the sign that the power of the wolf is gone? Certainly the laugh characterizes human beings as distinct from all other animals, and is a guarantee of humanity.

The assumption that the two youths were originally supposed to be werewolves, fantastic as it may seem, has some points in its favor other than its explanation of the ritual in which they were involved. It may also explain a very peculiar expression in Plutarch's account of them. He introduces them with the words *μειρακίων δυοῖν ἀπὸ γένους προσαχθέντων* and then refers to them as *τοὺς ἀπὸ γένους*. In all the editions and commentaries which I have been able to consult *ἀπὸ γένους* is always translated "noble," and I have not discovered any editor who is troubled by the expression. On the other hand, I have not been able to find any genuine parallel for this adjectival use of *γένος* in a prepositional phrase without some noun or adjective modifying and identifying it. The phrase seems to cry aloud for another word to clarify its meaning. There is no evidence which I have been able to discover that such a word has dropped out of the text of Plutarch, so one is driven back to ask from what source he took his description. He quotes some lines in connection with the youths from a Greek elegiac poem on Roman origins by one Butas,

<sup>34</sup> Smith, K. F. (above, note 32) 34 f.; Frazer (above, note 32) 308 f., 315; Summers (above, note 32) 116.

<sup>35</sup> Pley, J., *De lanae in antiquorum ritibus usu* (Giessen 1911) 80-94; Wyss, K., *Die Milch im Kultus der Griechen und Römer* (Giessen 1914) 32-39. Cf. Franklin (above, note 1) 85; Lambrechts (above, note 1) 174.

<sup>36</sup> Theocritus 14.22; Vergil, *Ed.* 9.53-54; Pliny, *H.N.* 8.34. Cf. Plato, *Rep.* 1.336p. Cf. Lambrechts (above, note 1) 174.

of whom nothing else is certainly known, although he may have been a freedman of Cato.<sup>37</sup> The poetic flavor of the dual in Plutarch's first reference to the youths, in which ἀπὸ γένους occurs, suggests that he may have taken his wording from Butas, and that either Plutarch omitted the noun or adjective which would have explained ἀπὸ γένους, or Butas himself omitted it when using his own sources. It is possible that in the archaic ritual of the Lupercalia, which the Romans would have preserved even if they no longer understood it, the youths were identified as members of a particular family, *ex gente*, followed by the missing word. Pliny uses just such a phrase in describing the Arcadian who was chosen to become a wolf: "ex gente Anthi cuiusdam sorte familiae lectum" (*H.N.* 8.81). In the period when the ritual of the Lupercalia originated, the youths may have been representative members of a family of hereditary werewolves which, for the protection of the community, and as part of a general purification, was exorcised every year at the season when their affliction was particularly dangerous. Later on, when, for reasons to be discussed later, the wolfish character of the Lupercalia faded into the background, and the primitive elements in state ritual were forgotten, the requirement of family membership for the youths would lapse, as it did in the case of the Luperci Fabiani and Quinctiales, but the words would remain in the ritual. At the same time the application of the knife would become symbolic, no longer drawing blood. Such an hypothesis may seem far-fetched, but it at least obviates the violence done to the Greek by the translation "noble." Moreover, we do hear of families near Rome who were associated with wolves, known as the *hirpi* or *hirpini Sorani*. These families are best known for their annual ceremony of walking over hot coals (Vergil, *Aen.* 11.785–88 and Servius *ad loc.*; Pliny, *N.H.* 7.19; Strabo 5.2.9, 5.4.12; Paulus 93 L.). One may note that in modern Greek folklore children who are believed to be congenital Kallikantzari may be rendered harmless by having the soles of their feet burned.<sup>38</sup> Servius tells us that the word *hirpus* is the Sabine equivalent of *lupus* and that the *hirpi* were supposed to imitate wolves. It does not, I think, stretch the evidence to assume that the *Hirpi Sorani* were a family of congenital werewolves like the Antaei, who were yearly exorcised by their fire walking ordeal.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Plut. *Cato Min.* 70; Arnobius 5.18.

<sup>38</sup> Lawson, J. C., *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion* (Cambridge 1910) 208–10. Cf. Dumézil (above, note 1) 216.

## V

If the preceding explanation of the part played by the two youths is plausible, we must next ask, who and what were the Luperci? Much has been written on the meaning of their name and its etymology, but the only point on which there seems to be general agreement is that it has something to do with wolves. Altheim in a recent discussion<sup>39</sup> has said that it is necessary to establish the meaning of Lupercus in order to understand the ritual of the Lupercalia. Since, however, this method of approach has led only to variety of opinion, it may be profitable to reverse the process and ask whether the ritual does not shed some light on the nature of the Luperci which will help us to grasp the meaning of their name.

The desirability of this method is suggested by Varro's discussion of the names of Roman priests (*L.L.* 5.83–86). He says: *sacerdotes omnes a sacris dicti*, and lists as examples the Pontifices, Curiones, Flamines, Salii, Luperci, Fratres Arvales, Sodales Titii, and Fetiales. In each case he derives the name from some characteristic rite or custom. In the case of the Flamines he comments: *horum singuli cognomina habent ab deo cui sacra faciunt*. Modern scholarship would reject many of Varro's derivations, but as one considers the names of Roman priests his principle seems to be sound. The priests are given functional names, and if the god whom they serve is mentioned in a name at all, it is in an adjectival form or in the genitive (e.g. *flamen Dialis*, *virgo Vestalis*, *sacerdos Cereris*). Since the full title of a Lupercus was Lupercus Quinctialis or Fabianus, one would therefore expect to find the name of the god, if any, in the adjectives. As far as I know no one has ever suggested such an idea and I see no reason why anyone ever should. Whether these *cognomina* are gentile names or derived from other sources, they certainly do not suggest any known divinity. This point must be stressed because it has been suggested that the Luperci are called after a god Lupercus, in whose honor the Lupercalia was celebrated.<sup>40</sup> This theory is *a priori* improbable for several reasons. In the first place there is, so far as I know, no other example in Roman religion of a name shared by a god and his priests.<sup>41</sup> In the second place there is only one reference in ancient literature to a god Lupercus. Justin says that there stood in the Lupercal a statue of a naked man wearing a girdle of goat-skin, which he identifies as a statue of

<sup>39</sup> *H.R.R.* (above, note 1) 206.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Altheim, *H.R.R.* (above, note 1) 206–17.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Rose, *Mnemosyne* 60 (1932–33) 387.

Lupercus (43.1). It seems probable that this was a statue of a Lupercus, not of the god. In the third place, it is highly improbable that, if there had been such a god, Varro would have derived the title of the Luperci from Lupercal and Lupercalia without even mentioning him (*L.L.* 5.85,6.13). Other ancient sources seem never to have heard of Lupercus, but suggest as the god of the Lupercalia Faunus, Pan, Inuus, Liber, and Juno, variously. It seems obvious that the Romans simply did not know who the god in question was, and each suggested the one that seemed best to him, from which we may conclude that no god was mentioned in the ritual. The same arguments hold good against the assumption that Lupercus is a cult title of another god, as Altheim especially maintains in connection with Faunus.<sup>42</sup>

Unfortunately the comparatively minor question of the identity of the god of the Lupercalia has become involved with the far larger problem of whether or not there was a pre-deistic period in Roman religion, or indeed whether there is such a thing as "praedeismus" at all.<sup>43</sup> Those who support the pre-deistic period see in the Lupercalia a magic rite for purification, protection and the increase of fertility. Those who oppose this concept see it as a ceremony held in honor or in fear of a wolf-god, Faunus-Lupercus.<sup>44</sup> Since, however, neither view explains the confusion of the ancient sources, the solution may lie elsewhere than between these two alternatives. In view of the season of the year and the nature of the ritual it is more probable that the Lupercalia was originally directed not at some specific wolf-god but, like the Feralia and the Lemuria, at the dead in general, who were believed to manifest their power at this season as wolves, natural and supernatural.

If we follow the principle of functional nomenclature, and keep in mind that the Lupercalia is intended to purify the community and protect it against the power of the dead, we see that the name of the Luperci, the agents of this purification and protection, should express this function. Whatever the exact etymology of the name, the Lupercus is, as Altheim puts it, "one who has some connection with the wolf." I would suggest that the connection is not that of

<sup>42</sup> See note 40.

<sup>43</sup> For a summary of the situation see Lambrechts (above, note 1); Dumézil, *L'Héritage Indo-Européen à Rome* (1949) 49-111.

<sup>44</sup> One may note that the prayer to Faunus which is sometimes cited as evidence for his relation to the Lupercalia is not recorded as part of the ritual in the ceremony, but is alluded to in one of the aetiological stories intended to account for the nakedness of the Luperci, quoted by Plutarch from Acilius (*Rom.* 21). Cf. Franklin (above, note 1) 55 f.

identity, but of control, and that the Lupercus is a "wolf-man" because he can control wolves, just as a "cow-man" or a "train-man" is in control of his charge, not identical with it. We may compare the Latin *subulcus*, *bubulcus*, *armentarius*, *caprarius*, *apiarius*. It is possible that originally the college of the Luperci was composed of men who were believed to be naturally endowed with the gift for controlling wolves, real or supernatural, like those men who are popularly supposed to have a gift for handling bees, or to understand the talk of birds. Again they might have been a group or a family who possessed some secret charm against wolves. Both types are common enough in primitive communities, or for that matter in more advanced societies. This gift they used in behalf of the community in a ritual devised against the powers of the dead. The ritual which they performed to exercise their powers would naturally begin at the cave of the wolves, which would derive its name from them and be known as the Lupercal, and the ceremony would be called their ceremony, the Lupercalia.

One may very reasonably ask why, if, as I have suggested, the Lupercalia was in its origin intimately connected with the season of the dead and was particularly associated with wolves and were-wolves, our ancient authorities do not in general seem to be aware of it. The answer to this question lies in the change which came over life in Rome. As the city grew, one obvious association with the dead would be forgotten, for the Sepulcretum, past which the Luperci had run, was abandoned early and even the memory of its existence disappeared. Then, too, the cave of the Lupercal, which was probably the lair of real wolves before humans moved in on them, would eventually have had its original tenants hunted out by the early Romans, for it had in it a spring which they would have wanted for their own use (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.79). As the city grew, wolves would become more and more of a rarity in the neighborhood. They care as little for human company as the human cares for theirs. In later times the appearance of a wolf in the city was a prodigy to be expiated (Livy 3.29.9). Thus the association of the wolf with the season of the dead would become less obvious, for their noisiness during the mating season would attract less attention. Moreover, when the festivals were attached to fixed dates in the calendar and lost their close relation to the season,<sup>45</sup> the Lupercalia would no longer necessarily coincide with

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Michels (above, note 27).



the wolves' mating. That the association of the festival with were-wolves should vanish would be the natural result of the dissociation from real wolves. It is also true that the ancient writers who discuss the Lupercalia were for the most part cultivated men who would not have cared to introduce the idea into their interpretation of a major state festival, even if they were familiar with it as a piece of popular superstition.<sup>46</sup> The only one who mentions it is Varro, who as a research scholar in the field of religion took a detached attitude towards such things. While the understanding of the Lupercalia gradually changed, so would the character of the priesthood of the Luperci. The peculiar requirements for the office would relax, and in the course of time the only thing that would be asked of a Lupercus would be an ability to run. Thus the meaning of the course run by the Luperci would no longer be obvious, and popular imagination would focus on their running and on their striking of the people. It would be at this time that the secondary idea of fertility in the ritual, which is so much stressed by some of the ancient authors, would come to the fore. We may, however, be sure that up to the end of its career the Lupercalia kept a strong hold on the popular imagination as a means of protection against misfortune, and especially disease, rather than as a fertility ritual. In A.D. 496 Pope Gelasius fulminated against the Christian senators who maintained that if the Lupercalia was abandoned, pestilence would come to Rome.<sup>47</sup> He argues that the festival was instituted as a fertility rite, but this was clearly not the generally accepted view. Perhaps to the Roman of the 5th century fertility was not an unmixed blessing. From what Gelasius says we see that the Lupercalia was celebrated by the lower classes (*infimi*), but supported in principle by the Christian aristocracy. It was still so popular that a recommendation from the Pope and action by the Senate were required before it was finally abandoned. We have here a striking example of the way in which the superstitious and semi-magical elements of a religion often seem to have the greatest power of survival.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Pliny's feeling on the subject, *H.N.* 8.80.

<sup>47</sup> *Adv. Androm.* (*Corp. Script. Eccles. Lat.* 35) 453-64. For the setting of Gelasius' treatise, see Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiasticae*, ad. ann. 496. The episode is discussed vividly by Gregorovius, *Rome in the Middle Ages* (London 1894) 262-65. On the very doubtful connection of the Lupercalia with the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin, see Toutain, "Les Lupercales Romaines et la Fête Chrétienne de la Purification de la Vierge," *RHR* 79 (1919) 1-13; Greene, W. M., "The Lupercalia in the Fifth Century," *CP* 26 (1931) 60-69.