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Carna, Proca and the *Strix* on the Kalends of June*

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For your bowels' sake, Ovid tells the readers of his *Fasti*, it is customary to eat beans and bacon on the first day of June. This quaint folk custom, similar to many in our own day,[1] might not attract very much attention, were it not prefaced by the gruesome tale of a crying baby, a clever nymph, flying witches, and a slaughtered piglet. But, rather than being a simple collection of weird elements, the story and the custom (or, if you prefer, the myth and the ritual) can be studied in conjunction to throw light on Roman attitudes toward misfortune generally and infant death specifically, to highlight the importance to the Romans of controlling liminal space, and to illustrate the paradigmatic nature of the Roman calendar.

The story as Ovid tells it (*Fast.* 6.101—82) runs as follows.[2] In the days of the Alban kings, evil creatures called *striges* flew into the chamber where the crown prince Proca, only five days old, lay sleeping in his crib. He cried out when they attacked him, which brought his nurse running. As soon as she saw his loss of color and the scratches on his cheeks, the nurse went to the nymph Carna (sometimes called Cranäe) to get help. Carna came to the house, touched the thresholds and windows with an arbutus branch, and sprinkled them with water. She then killed a piglet and left out its viscera for the *striges,* but forbade everyone there from turning to see them. From then on, the *striges* left the child alone, and he soon recovered his color.

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[1]See Hand 1961: 6.365f., nos. 2826–32, esp. 2829, in which a certain Mr. Walter Ridgeway of West Plains, Missouri, is cited as saying, "A dish known as hoppinjohn, which consists of black-eyed peas cooked with hog jowl, is the traditional New Year's dinner in many well-to-do families who would not eat such coarse food on any other day.... The name hoppinjohn originated when a guest named John was invited to 'hop in' and help himself to the food."

[2]The Latin text is cited *infra.*

It is difficult to see the relevance of the story, charming as it is, to the custom of eating beans and bacon. Probably for this reason, most scholars have chosen to ignore the issue, concentrating instead on the figure of Carna herself. Thus she was considered a chthonic divinity by Wissowa,[3] a lunar goddess by Pettazzoni,[4] a bean-goddess by Latte,[5] and a patroness of digestion by Dumézil.[6] Informing each of these studies is the hope of recovering the nymph's original nature and function by somehow getting "beneath" Ovid's text, which consequently receives somewhat summary treatment. Yet, even a cursory look at the passage reveals a topic rich in meaning, one that raises a number of interesting questions: Why did the *striges* attack Proca? Why was Carna able to avert them? What has any of this got to do with beans and bacon? Why are all these things localized by Ovid to the Kalends of June? It is necessary to account for all these elements as a whole and in relationship to each other if we hope to gain any real appreciation of what the first day of June and its stories meant to the Romans.

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If we began this investigation with its central incident, the attack of the *striges* upon the infant Proca, we would not get very far. Of Proca the Romans knew little beyond the fact that he was one of the Alban kings, he ruled for twenty-two years and left behind two sons, the contentious Numitor and Amulius.[7] It might then seem more profitable to start with the *strix*, though again, we are confronted with a frustrating void: the details concerning the *strix* were vague to the Romans, and even the normally prolix Pliny the Elder confesses himself stumped about the creature (*HN* 11.232; see below, pp. 11–12). But where natural history and philology are of no use, we still have recourse to anthropology, in particular, the anthropology of misfortune and witchcraft. By considering the place witches and other child-afflicting demons fill generally in anthropological thought, we can make better sense of our specific Roman evidence.[8]

[3]Wissowa 1912: 235f.

[4]Pettazzoni 1940.

[5]Latte 1960: 70f. See n. 43 below.

[6]Dumézil 1970: 1.385–87.

[7]See von Geisau 1957.

[8]Some clarification concerning terminology is in order. The differences between various agents of misfortune, including witches, have been thoroughly discussed by Evans-Pritchard 1937. Strictly speaking, witches are mortal in nature, though in behavior they may resemble supernatural agents of misfortune; cf. Douglas 1966: 102–9. In light of this distinction

In many traditional societies, misfortunes of any sort (disease, bad luck, death, etc.) are viewed primarily in relation to specific circumstances. The relationship between remote and immediate causes was first articulated by E. E. Evans-Pritchard in his classic work on this topic, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*:

> It is the particular and variable conditions of an event and not the general and universal conditions that witchcraft explains. Fire is hot, but it is not owing to witchcraft, for that is its nature. It is a universal quality of fire to burn, but it is not a universal quality of fire to burn you. This may never happen; or once in a lifetime, and then only if you have been bewitched.[9]

It is important to note in Evans-Pritchard's remarks that misfortune cannot be understood to occur randomly, but rather has a purposeful existence that is guided in large part by witches and demons. In an essay in appreciation of Evans-Pritchard's work, Max Gluckman elaborates upon belief in witchcraft as a way of explaining the conditions of any one misfortune. He writes:

> The problem which the African answers with his belief in witchcraft is this: why misfortune to me? He knows that there are diseases which make people ill; he knows that hippos upset dugouts and drown people. But he asks himself: "why should I be ill and not other people?"[10]

The question which Gluckman's African asks and which would have occurred to his ancient Roman counterpart—Why me?—demands an answer. The witch provides this answer: it is the witch who causes your particular misfortune. One can easily see why the witch would be a preferable alternative to a chaotic world where misfortunes occur in a random and indiscriminate fashion. As an alternative to chaos, demonological beliefs are very much in line with scientific thinking. According to Robin Horton:

> The quest for explanatory theory is basically the quest for unity underlying apparent diversity; for simplicity underlying apparent

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between the various agents, we should bear in mind that the *strix* is a supernatural demon and not a mortal agent of evil intent, i.e., a "witch" in the modern anthropological sense of the term.

[9]Evans-Pritchard 1937: 69.

[10]Gluckman 1970: 323.

> complexity; for order underlying apparent disorder; for regularity underlying apparent anomaly.[11]

Thus, Horton goes on to note, medical science employs germ theory to explain disease, while many peoples of Africa (and, by extension, other traditional societies) see witchcraft as its underlying cause. The logic is essentially the same: illness is thought to arise not from accidental causes, but from an actual negative agency.

In a traditional society, figures such as witches and demons are not the problem but rather the solution to the still more disturbing problem of chance. Deaths without any apparent cause can readily be explained in terms of witchcraft. A case in point is the sudden death of a popular young leader: Germanicus' untimely demise, for example, was widely attributed to poison, curse tablets, *aliaque malefica*, "and other implements of evil-doing," writes Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.69); the people faulted the gods, attacking temples (Tac. *Ann.* 2.82) and throwing down statues into the streets (Suet. *Cal.* 6), while supernatural means were blamed during the Senate's official inquiry into the matter (Tac. *Ann.* 3.13).[12] Where visible causes for specific misfortunes are lacking, hidden agents (whether divine or human) are assumed: witchcraft, which operates outside the parameters of normal life, thus provides the rationale for misfortunes that would be otherwise inexplicable.[13]

As noted above, illness is often explained in terms of witchcraft. Like a wound from a spear, disease was (and is) thought to be an attack upon the body from outside; unlike a spear-wound, however, the attack of a disease is invisible.[14] Furthermore, because witches were thought to operate in a secret and backward manner, their attacks were believed to come not from without but

[11]Horton 1970: 342.

[12]It is striking that the death of a popular young leader calls out for some all-encompassing explanation: the conspiracy theories that continue to swirl around the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, even thirty-five years after his death, come to mind in this context.

[13]See the remarks of Needham 1978: 23–50, esp. 30–32.

[14]The analogy is not simply metaphorical among the Azande; cf. Evans-Pritchard 1937: 38: "Witches also shoot objects, called *ahu mangu*, things of witchcraft, into the bodies of those they wish to injure. This leads to pain where the missile is lodged...." Consider too that, in the 1580s, as Thomas Harriot wrote (*A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* [1588], Repr. in *The Roanoke Voyages: 1584-1590*, ed. D. B. Quinn [London 1955] 380), the Algonquins believed the English colonists killed them deliberately with disease "by shooting invisible bullets into them."

from within.[15] These inner assaults were accomplished by the *striges* of ancient Italy through suckling their victim,[16] or, more commonly, through removing their inner substance by biting or sucking.[17] Thus Horace portrays Canidia and her cohorts starving a young boy, hoping *exsecta uti medulla et aridum iecur / amoris esset poculum*, "to use his cut out marrow and withered liver to make a love potion" (*Epod.* 5.37f.).[18] So widespread is this belief that it forms the basis of jokes, as for instance, in a famous scene from Plautus' *Pseudolus* in which a cook disparages his rivals' use of spices by saying:

> ei homines cenas ubi coquont, cum condiunt,
> non condimentis condiunt, sed strigibus,
> vivis convivis intestina quae exedint. (819–21)
>
> When these people season the meals they're cooking, they don't use spices
> for spicing, but instead *striges,* to eat out the entrails of the living guests.

Less amusing is the story told by Trimalchio of a young boy, already dead, whom *striges* attack. After they have been chased off by a Cappadocian slave, the child's mother turns to see a horrible sight (Petr. 63.8):

[15]Cf. Douglas 1973: 113f. Evidence of such behavior from numerous cultures can be cited. For the Azande, see Evans-Pritchard 1937: 38f. One prominent example concerns the *mulukwausi* (flying witches) of the Trobriand Islanders, on which Malinowski 1922: 242 writes:

> The *mulukwausi* will eat out the eyes, the tongue, and the "insides" (*lopoula*) of the corpse; when they attack a living man they may simply hit him or kick him, and then he becomes more or less sick. But sometimes they get hold of an individual and treat him like a corpse and eat some of his organs, and then the man dies. It is possible to see this, for such a person would quickly fail, losing his speech, his vision, sometimes suddenly being bereft of all power of movement. It is a less dangerous method to a living man when the *mulukwausi*, instead of eating his "insides" on the spot, simply remove them. They hide them in a place only known to themselves, in order to have provision for a future feast.

[16]Especially common for infants, cf. Q. Serenus Sammonicus 58.1035f. (*PLM* 3.155), who cites Titinius in the following lines: *praeterea si forte premit strix atra puellos / virosa immulgens exertis ubera labris,* "Especially if by chance a black *strix* attacks the boys, offering its foul-smelling breasts to their eager lips for suck..." See too Plin. *HN* 11.232. Other animals, less malevolent, that were used for this purpose include the brood-mare that nursed Camilla (*A.* 11.572), and, of course, the wolf that suckled Romulus and Remus. See A. Guida, "More on She-goat Nurses," *CP* 80 (1985): 151.

[17]Exhaustively catalogued by Kittredge 1956: 531 n. 103. Cf. Gaster 1973: 20f.

[18]On these lines, see Oliensis 1991: 110. The textual variant *exsucta,* "sucked out," for *exsecta,* "cut out," may perhaps be preferable.

> sed dum mater amplexaret corpus filii sui, tangit et videt manuciolum de stratamentis factum. Non cor habebat, non intestina, non quicquam: scilicet iam puerum strigae involaverant et supposuerant stratamenticum vavatonem.
>
> But when the mother embraced her son's body, she felt and saw a sheaf made of straw. It had no heart, no insides, not a thing; evidently the witches had carried the boy off and had left behind a straw doll.

It has been suggested that the *vavato* is no substitute, but rather the body of the boy himself, with the moisture of his vitality entirely removed.[19] Along the same lines, the First Witch in *Macbeth* (1.3.18) threatens, "I'll drain him dry as hay." It is this manner of inward attack—the life-stealing bite—that is visited upon Proca in the *Fasti* legend under study: evidence of this loss of vitality is the blanching after the *striges*' attacks that afflicts the infant Proca (*Fast.* 6.149f.), as well as Trimalchio's Cappadocian hero (Petr. 63.9).

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The macabre image of a mother holding a straw doll replacement in place of her dead child focuses our attention on the place of the witch in society's symbolic structure: it is not simply that witches exist to do evil (and thus are inversions of normal human beings),[20] but, beyond this, witches harm children, thus conspicuously displaying their inverted natures as women.[21] In a recent article on the function of child-stealing witches in ancient Greek thought, Sarah Iles Johnston has aptly remarked: "a female who would kill a child, or prevent its birth in the first place, ran completely contrary, of course, to the fecund and nurturing mother who was held up as the norm to which all women should aspire."[22] The folk-tale of Hänsel and Gretel comes to mind here: the witch lures the children to her house with promises of food, but instead intends to eat

[19]The translation of *vavatonem*, a *hapax legomenon*, is by no means certain. The remarks of Schuster 1930: 177 are worth noting: "der Ausdruck *stratamenticum vavatonem* läßt erkennen, daß der *vavato* äußerlich noch durchaus die menschliche Gestalt zeigte; ebendarum wirft sich die schmerzerfüllte Mutter über ihn...die Hexen haben lediglich die Haut übriggelassen und sie mit Stroh (Häckerling) gefüllt." On moisture as vitality, see Onians 1951: 31–35, 254–56, 271–74.

[20]Needham 1978: 35–44, esp. 35: "...the witch proceeds upside down, walking on his hands as the Kaguru imagine, or presents himself backwards."

[21]The charge of infanticide and child-killing is frequently leveled against enemies as a way of marking them as "inhuman," as, for example, Roman charges against the Carthaginians; cf. Christian accusations against the Jews, on which see Needham 1978: 33.

[22]Johnston 1995: 367.

them. The oven in which she tries to cook Gretel is a kind of reversed womb, one giving death instead of life. Clearly to be seen in this tale is the witch as inverted mother-figure, with whom we might compare the portrait of Canidia in Horace's fifth *Epode*. The boy, whom she kidnaps in hopes of eating his viscera, begs for his life *per liberos te, si vocata partubus / Lucina veris adfuit*, "by your children, if ever Lucina was called to attend actual births" (5.5f.).[23]

Epode 5 is a literary treatment of a great cultural concern among the ancients: indeed, the mortality rate for infants in classical antiquity was staggeringly high (an estimated thirty to forty percent in the first year of life alone).[24] In light of such information, it is not entirely surprising that figures like Canidia or the *strix* are to be found in Latin literature. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the child-killing witch is only one of various ways by which a society might explain the deaths of its youngest members.[25] The question of *why* a witch should appear in this particular Roman context broaches a much larger issue. As Mary Douglas notes in *Natural Symbols*, "it is well-enough recognized among anthropologists that witchcraft beliefs flourish where there is ambiguity in the patterning of roles."[26] Where there is a belief in witches, then, we must seek the cultural ambiguity and resulting anxiety from which it arises. With this in mind, let us turn to a sepulchral inscription from Rome, composed at some point during the early principate,[27] that commemorates the death of a four-year-old named Jucundus (*CIL* 6.19747 = *ILS* 8522 = *CLE* 987). The final lines of this epitaph are quite illuminating:

[23]The boy's question a few lines later, *quid ut noverca me intueris*, "why do you look at me like a stepmother" (*Epod.* 5.9) emphasizes the same point: Canidia is more like a stepmother than a "true" mother. To be noted is the fact that the witch forces the poet to "retract" this particular affront in the famous palinode *Epod.* 17.50–52. In general, see Noy 1991. In fairy tales, the stepmother often substitutes for the witch as a child-hating female figure, on which see Bettelheim 1976: 66–73, 113–15.

[24]See remarks of Scobie 1983: 83. On mortality rates, see Golden 1988: 155.

[25]The theft of children by supernatural creatures is a standard theme in Western literature, one which includes not only the abduction of Hylas and Ganymede in Greek mythology but even the unfortunate youngsters of famous poems like Goethe's "Der Erlkönig" or Yeats' "The Stolen Child." The child-stealing figure is not always thought to be demonic in nature.

[26]Douglas 1970: 107.

[27]It seems certain that the Livia, wife of Drusus Caesar, mentioned in the opening line of the inscription is Livilla, daughter of Germanicus and Agrippina (see Ollendorff, "Livius (Livia) 38 *RE* 13.1 [1926] 924–27), so the epitaph can be dated to some time before 31 C.E., when Tiberius had her put to death (Suet. *Cal.* 38).

> eripuit me saga manus crudelis, ubique
> cum manet in terris et nocit arte sua.
> vos vestros natos concustodite parentes,
> ni dolor in toto pectore fixsus eat.
>
> A cruel and cunning (i.e., witchly) hand seized me, while she remains everywhere on earth and does harm with her craft. You parents, guard your children together, lest grief be fastened in your whole heart.

The inscription is a direct first-person statement by the dead child Jucundus that includes a command to all parents to guard their children (better, presumably, than he himself has been guarded).[28] The tone of Jucundus' epitaph is accusatory and so reflects the guilt of the parents who commissioned it.

If we consider that the same vague sense of guilt that informs this particular sepulchral inscription generally lies behind the belief in child-stealing demons, some elements of Ovid's narration come more sharply into view. The inclusion of the nurse in the tale, for example, highlights (perhaps inadvertently) the conspicuous absence of Proca's parents from the activities.[29] It is the nurse who notices the infant's affliction, while it is the nymph who remedies it; insofar as they have any presence at all in the story, the parents are perfunctorily off to the side weeping (*Fast.* 6.153), incapable of either

[28]The choice of the verb *concustodio* here is intriguing: the prefix *con-* implies both joint action on the part of *vos parentes*, "you parents," as well as an intensification of the root verb's meaning, "to guard." This latter sense is brought out strongly when considered alongside two other instances: Ovid's Hercules, for instance, speaks of stealing the *pomaque insomni concustodita dracone*, "the apples guarded by the sleepless dragon" (*Met.* 9.190). More pointedly, in the *Aulularia*, the panic-stricken Euclio bemoans the loss of the eponymous pot of gold by exclaiming *nam quid mihi opust vita qui perdidi tantum auri / quod sedulo concustodivi*, "what's the point of living, now that I've lost all that gold I guarded so carefully" (*Aul.* 723f.). Like both the apples of the Hesperides and the pot of gold, young children are precious objects that, despite careful watching, might be stolen away.

[29]Professor David Thurmond points out to me that we might question whether the nurse was original to the story at all. The evidence for wet-nurses in Italy before the second century B.C.E. is difficult to ascertain: Plautus makes casual reference to wet-nurses (e.g., *Mil.* 697), but Plutarch writes that Licinia, the wife of Cato the Elder, breast-fed her own son (*Cat. Ma.* 20.3). Messalla, in Tacitus' *Dialogus* (28), indicates that there was once a time when Roman mothers nursed their own children, but his remark smacks of nostalgia for a time that never was. In general, see Bradley 1986: 201–29 and Dixon 1988: 120–29, 145–54. Certainly royal Greek children were cared for by nurses, and perhaps their royal counterparts in Alba Longa were similarly seen to? If we take it, however, that the nurse is an anachronism, the interesting question of when she was inserted into the story arises: has Ovid put her into the story to emphasize the parents' distance from the baby? Or rather is the story one of those *fabulae aniles*, into which some nurse somewhere in the tradition has decided to put herself?

diagnosing, treating, or even interacting with their child. In this respect, the legend of Proca indicates that, at some level in any case, Roman society was not as insensitive to the widespread deaths of its children as Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.93) or Seneca (*Ep.* 99.1) would have us believe.[30]

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As the embodiment of all that is hostile to society, the witch is an expression of "anti-structure," and so can only be pictured in liminal and reversed imagery.[31] For this reason, witches are more at home with the dead than the living, and so frequent graveyards: Horace's Canidia, for instance, performs her witchcraft in the potter's field on the Esquiline.[32] Everything about witches is "wrong," so that, as Mary Douglas has noted, the witch (here male) "is associated symbolically with the reverse of the way that a normal human lives, with night instead of day. His powers are abnormal, he can fly, be in two places at once, change his shape. Above all, he is a deceiver, someone whose external

[30]On this issue, see generally Golden 1988, with relevant older bibliography.

[31]Precisely because of its lack of definition, the margin, as an area between culturally-invested categories, is a place of great power. On liminal space in antiquity, see Johnston 1991. Discussing this phenomenon, Victor Turner 1967: 97 noted, "Liminality may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural assertions..." It is often the case that the mediating or liminal entity is marked as ambiguous by its combination of traits from categories on either side of a binary opposition. At times, however, this can go beyond the simple borrowing of traits from antithetical cultural categories to the complete reversal of these categories altogether. As a deliberate disordering of cultural categories, such "symbolic inversion" is related to liminality, for both designedly expose the underlying structure of symbolic classification by positing anti-structures of classification. Thus, in folklore, the world is often turned upside down: the powerful and powerless exchange places. As the sociologist Barbara Babcock (1978: 32) remarks, "What is socially peripheral is often symbolically central." In other cases, such inversion is meant to point to cultural anxieties, for reversals in imagery frequently mark times that are somehow unusual in either a positive or negative sense. In this way, the reversed use of external symbolism is meant to mirror the inner turmoil or exhilaration of a group or people. The relationship of liminality to inversion is discussed generally in the essays edited by Babcock 1978. In particular, see her introduction, esp. 26–28, and Turner's "Comments and Conclusions," 276–96, esp. 278f., 281 and 295.

[32]Cf. *S.* 1.8.14, *Epod.* 5.100, 17.58. Originally a paupers' graveyard, the Esquiline was taken over by Maecenas in the 20s B.C.E., when Horace is writing, and turned into the famous gardens, the *Horti Maecenati.* Professor Mary T. Boatwright, in a forthcoming article she has generously shown me, notes that these gardens straddled the Servian Wall, and so are "ideal for structuralist analysis, lying both within and outside the ritually-defined city of Rome and spanning birth/growth and death, rich and poor, and the famous and the nameless" (n. 55). It is not surprising that witches should be associated with such a liminal space. On the relationship of Canidia to Maecenas, see Oliensis 1991: 127–30.

appearance does not automatically betray his interior nature."[33] As Trimalchio entreats his dinner guests after his harrowing story, *rogo vos, oportet credatis, sunt mulieres plussciae, sunt nocturnae, et quod sursum est, deorsum faciunt,* "I beg you, you must believe it, there are overly wise women, women of the night, who turn everything that is right upside down" (Petr. 63.9).[34] Furthermore, as Jonathan Z. Smith remarks in an article dealing with the place of demonic powers in antiquity:

> The most frequent form of demons is that of hybrid or monster, a protean figure capable of a range of transformations or as a being with superfluous parts.... To translate this range: demons are perceived as being either overdefined or underdetermined.[35]

Developing Smith's thoughts further, Johnston has rightly noted that the shape-shifting of witches and demons might also be deemed liminal, representing "a diachronic form of hybridism," in which the traits of two or more different creatures are displayed not at once, but at separate times.[36]

These observations are of great use to us in understanding the mysterious creatures, the *striges*, that attack Proca and that are described by Ovid as follows (*Fast.* 6.131–34, 139f.):

> sunt avidae volucres; non quae Phineia mensis
> guttura fraudabant; sed genus inde trahunt.
> grande caput: stantes oculi: rostra apta rapinae:
> canities pennis, unguibus hamus inest....
>
> est illis strigibus nomen; sed nomine huius
> causa, quod horrenda stridere nocte solent.

[33]Douglas 1973: 113.

[34]As an interesting addendum to the nocturnal activity of witches in antiquity, see *CIL* 6.3089, from a *vigiles* barracks, which, while difficult to make out, clearly shows the word *saga* several times.

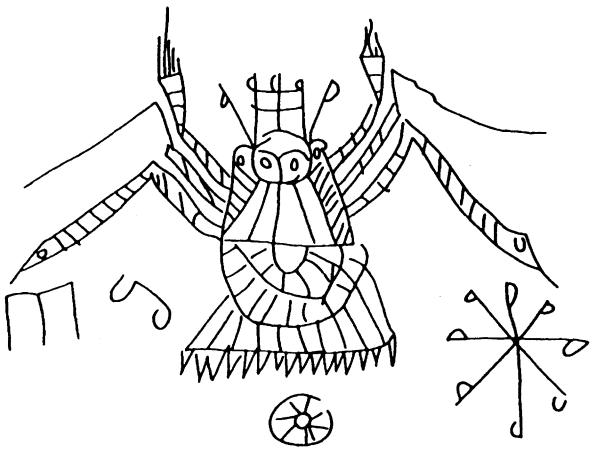
[35]Smith 1978: 430. Cf. Johnston 1995: 363: "[T]he demon is not merely outside of any single, given taxon, but situated squarely *between* two taxa that are considered to be mutually exclusive; ...the werewolf is a good example: it is far more frightening than either a normal wolf or a normal man would be precisely because it fails to adhere to the taxon of 'human' or of 'animal.' " Note the snaky hair of Canidia (Hor. *Epod.* 5.15), Sagana's hair *ut marinus asperis / echinus aut currens aper* (5.27f.), and also the relationship of Canidia to dogs, on which see Oliensis 1991: 120. On the hybrid monsters of Hes. *Th.* 233–336, see the Freudian explanation of Caldwell 1989: 153. See too the illuminating discussion of monstrous demons in modern-day Greece by Stewart 1991: 180–83.

[36]Johnston 1995: 363.

> There are greedy birds, not those that cheated Phineus' gullet of its supper, though they are drawn from that stock. They have a large head, staring eyes, beaks suited for plunder, ashen plumage, and a claw with hooks...they are called *striges*, a name they get because they are prone to shriek terribly at night.

As portrayed here, the *strix* is a hodgepodge of horror, sporting a Harpy's pedigree, a raptor's claws and beak, an owl's eyes, and (worst of all) the terrible nocturnal screeching of Vergil's *Fama* (*A.* 4.184f.). We might compare this disconcerting composite with a drawing found on a Greek curse-tablet inscribed to "heart-feasting Hekate," which shows obvious signs of hybridism (fig. 1).[37]

Figure 1



after Gager (1992): 181 fig. 20

The ambiguity of a fearsome being like the *strix*, or any innards-eating demon, delights the poet and artist but perplexes the natural historian, who confesses his confusion (Plin. *HN* 11.232):

[37]From *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World.* Copyright © 1992 by John G. Gager. Used by permission of Oxford University Press, Inc. Gager cites descriptions of the figure as "a bat with outstretched wings," and a "six-armed Hecate." Personally, I think it looks like the combination of the legs and body of a spider (a creature which does, in fact, eat out the insides of its victims) with the tail of some sort of bird.

> fabulosum enim arbitror de strigibus ubera eas infantium labris immulgere. esse in maledictis iam antiquis strigem convenit, sed quae sit avium constat non arbitror.
>
> I think the story of the *striges* who put milk from their teats into the lips of infants is made up. It is agreed that, even in the old days, the *strix* was among the cursed creatures, but which particular bird is meant I think is uncertain.

His uncertainty is reflected in the scholarly tradition: most translators take *strix* as "screech-owl,"[38] though Samuel Oliphant made a strong case in favor of "bat."[39] In light of the anthropological remarks noted above, however, together with Pliny's confessed uncertainty, it seems best to consider the *strix* as undefinable, composed of the parts of many fearful animals but identified with no particular one: it is, in Victor Turner's phrase, a creature "betwixt and between." The place of the *strix* beyond accurate description puts it unequivocally beyond all human control, thus endowing it with a heightened ability to inspire dread.

After indulging his imagination in depicting the *striges,* Ovid claims to be unsure *sive igitur nascuntur aves, seu carmine fiunt,* "whether they are born birds, or become so by enchantment" (*Fast.* 6.141). His uncertainty is

[38]See Capponi 1981: 301–4, and Scobie 1978, esp. 75 n. 6 for older bibliography. A powerful but not in itself persuasive argument for *strix* as screech owl is the fact that *Striges* is the ornithological appellation of the entire sub-order of owls. See too Apul. *Met.* 3.21, *fit bubo Pamphile.*

[39]Oliphant 1913: 133–49, and Oliphant 1914: 49–63. Oliphant 1913: 141f. n. 19 contends that Ovid's account of the *strix* cited above "applies in an especial manner to the bat" (142). The case is argued with a subtlety worthy of Newman and the Tractarians, and Hübner 1969: 268 cites it with apparent approval. Nonetheless, Oliphant is probably wrong: consider the fact that Ovid was well aware of possible metamorphosis into bat-form at *Met.* 4.389–415. It should be noted, however, that there is cross-cultural evidence of witches associated with bats, cf. Evans-Pritchard 1937: 60–62 and Kittredge 1956: 135, 175, 492. The desire to equate the *strix* with the *vespertilio* is understandable, since, out of all creatures, the bat is the most clearly liminal: cf. Var. *Men.* fr. 13, *quid multa? factus sum vespertilio, neque in muribus plane neque in volucribus sum,* "what else should I say? I became a bat, and am neither clearly among the mice nor among the birds." Because of its ambiguity, there is a tendency among scholars to identify hybrid forms in different cultures as bats. For example, on a Mesopotamian statuette from Mari, see the remarks of Goldsmith and Gould 1990: 142: "The art expert, donning white cotton gloves to protect the figurine against skin acids, pronounces it a lion-headed chimaera. Most biologists—certainly most chiroptera experts—take one look and say bat." See counter-arguments of Albenda 1991. More successfully along these lines, Legast 1989 argues that the numerous pieces of zoomorphic art from the Tairona culture in Colombia represent the "under-recognized" bat.

somewhat disingenuous, for the belief in the *strix* as transformed old woman was widespread.[40] In connection with this, we should recall that metamorphosis in Greco-Roman culture as a whole consisted only of physical, not mental, alteration. Describing Circe's transformation of Odysseus' men into pigs (the first such transformation in classical literature), for example, Homer writes, οἱ δὲ συῶν μὲν ἔχον κεφαλὰς φωνήν τε τρίχας τε / καὶ δέμας, αὐτὰρ νοῦς ἦν ἔμπεδος ὡς τὸ πάρος περ, "they took on the heads, voice, bristles and shape of swine, but their mind was intact as before" (*Od.* 10.239f.).[41] Several centuries later, Lucius in the *Golden Ass* emphatically makes the same point: *ego vero, quamquam perfectus asinus et pro Lucio iumentum, sensum tamen retinebam humanum*, "although I was indeed a complete ass and a beast of burden rather than Lucius, I nonetheless held onto my human intelligence" (*Met.* 3.26). The transformations that constitute the *leitmotiv* of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* encompass only alteration of the outer appearance as well.[42]

In regard to Book 6 of the *Fasti*, we must imagine that the *striges* who attack the infant are likewise changed externally, but otherwise retain possession of their faculties. This observation is of great use in uncovering the structure upon which the Proca legend is framed: the *striges* attack their victim's inner organs, but their own inner natures remain unchanged. The dynamic central to the legend—at its heart, if you will—is the tension between outer transformation and inner preservation.

****

It is in light of this underlying dichotomy between external and internal change that we should look at Ovid's remarks following the legend about the eating of beans and bacon.. As the poet writes (*Fast.* 6.169f., 181f.):

> pinguia cur illis gustentur larda Kalendis,
> mixtaque cum calido sit faba farre, rogas?...

[40]Ovid himself writes of the transformation of the hag Dipsas (*Am.* 1.8.13f.), and cf. Apul. *Met.* 3.21. On witches' metamorphoses in later times, see Kittredge 1956: 174–84. On the *naenia Marsia* in the following line of Ovid's text (6.142), see the discussion of Dench 1995: 160–73 concerning the Marsi as witches and marginal figures.

[41]Hor. *Epod.* 17.17f. is distinctly at odds with the tradition.

[42]On this topic in Ovid, see Solodow 1988: 174–96, esp. 175: "An essential feature of Ovid's concept of metamorphosis is continuity between the former and the metamorphosed state." On transformations in Western culture generally, see Skulsky 1981, esp. 10–106, for ancient examples.

> quae duo mixta simul sextis quicumque Kalendis
> ederit, huic laedi viscera posse negant.
>
> Why is rich bacon eaten on these Kalends, and why are beans mixed with hot spelt, you ask? ...Whoever eats these two foods at the same time mixed together on the Kalends of June, they say his viscera cannot be harmed.

For this reason, according to Varro, the first of June was known as the *Kalendae Fabariae,* "Bean Kalends" (*L.* 5.66).[43] In many parts of the world, the bean is a food charged with great superstitious significance:[44] among the Pythagoreans, for example, the eating of beans was prohibited, a topic attracting much scholarly attention.[45] In Rome, beans were given to ghosts on the Lemuria (discussed below, pp. 25–26), while the Flamen Dialis was forbidden both from eating them (Festus 87M = 77L), and even from uttering their name (Gel. 10.15.12). According to the strictures of philosophers and priests, beans were problematic; among the folk, however, beans were a favorite food, particularly when served with bacon. Even to Horace, whose stomach was notoriously tender (cf. *Epod.* 3, *S.* 1.5.7, 49), the mere thought of a simple country dinner consisting of beans and bacon elicited the highest praise (*S.* 2.6.65): *o noctes cenaeque deum!* "Oh nights and meals of the gods!"

Ovid's juxtaposition of the culinary custom with the legend of Carna has led many to consider the nymph as some sort of protector of the internal organs. In the fifth century C.E., for instance, Macrobius notes (1.12.32):

> hanc deam vitalibus humanis praeesse credunt. ab ea denique petitur ut iecinora et corda, quaeque sunt intrinsecus viscera salva conservet.
>
> They say that this goddess [i.e., Carna] is in charge of human vital organs. From her it is sought that she keep safe livers, hearts, and such organs as are within.

We cannot know whether Macrobius was drawing on older material lost to us or was instead simply speculating about Carna's sphere of influence by

[43]Latte 1960: 70f. maintains that June first represented a celebration of the first bean harvest of the year. However, his explanation of the relationship between the Carna story and the custom is superficial.

[44]See discussion of Lévi-Strauss 1979.

[45]For discussion of ancient and modern views, see Pease 1920–23: 203 and Burkert 1972: 183–85. Cf. the structuralist interpretation of Detienne 1977: 49–52. On the possibility of favism, see Brumbaugh and Schwartz 1980, with the hostile rejoinder of Scarborough 1981.

extrapolating from Ovid's text. In the former case, his information is critically important; in the latter case, he is in no better a position to know than we are. The four centuries' silence on the topic between the *Metamorphoses* and the *Saturnalia* is difficult to interpret. Nonetheless, Georges Dumézil has boldly proclaimed that "the two foodstuffs associated with this day, beans and bacon, have equal importance and symbolize all the foods which are thought to be transformed into *viscera*."[46] He draws evidence that a deity might thus be brought into being from a hymn of the *Rig Veda* (1.187) addressed to the personification of food, Pitú. Dumézil notes that the hymn "contains expressions very close to Macrobius's definition." Food has physical vigor, he continues, which clearly allies it with the Indo-European warrior function, represented among the Romans by Juno, in whose month Carna's story is told. As is so often the case, Dumézil's insights are thought-provoking but not in themselves probative. Vedic evidence notwithstanding, the lack of any specific confirmatory statement from Ovid himself on the matter of Carna's protection of the inner organs makes the argument hard to swallow. Is there another way to bridge the gap?

Perhaps we ought to look closely at what Ovid *does* say about Carna, for he is, in fact, quite explicit about her actions in warding off the *striges*, who *pectora exsorbent*, "suck at [the child's] breast" (*Fast.* 6.145). As the narrative continues (151–68), after hearing the child's scream and seeing his scratches and loss of color, the nurse

> pervenit ad Cranäem et rem docet. illa, 'timorem
> pone: tuus sospes,' dixit, 'alumnus erit.'
> venerat ad cunas: flebant materque paterque:
> 'sistite vos lacrimas, ipsa medebor' ait.
> protinus arbutea postes ter in ordine tangit
> fronde, ter arbutea limina fronde notat;
> spargit aquis aditus (et aquae medicamen habebant)
> extaque de porca cruda bimenstra tenet;
> atque ita 'noctis aves, extis puerilibus' inquit
> 'parcite: pro parvo victima parva cadit.
> cor pro corde, pro fibris sumite fibras.
> hanc animam vobis pro meliore damus.'
> sic ubi libavit, prosecta sub aethere ponit,
> quique adsint sacris, respicere illa vetat;
> virgaque Ianalis de spina ponitur alba,
> qua lumen thalamis parva fenestra dabat.

[46]Dumézil 1970: 1.387.

post illud nec aves cunas violasse feruntur,
et rediit puero, qui fuit ante, color.

(She) went to Crane, and laid the matter before her. She responded, "Don't be afraid, your charge will be safe." The goddess came to the cradle, where the mother and father were weeping. She said, "Stop crying, I myself will heal the child." Right away, she touched the door-posts three times in a row with an arbutus branch, she marked the threshold three times with the arbutus branch. She sprinkled the entrance three times with water (drugs were in that water), and she held out the raw innards of a two-month old piglet, saying, "You birds of the night, spare the child's viscera: a small victim falls on another small one's behalf. I pray, take a heart for a heart, entrails for entrails. This life we give in place of a better one." When she had made this offering, she placed the excised innards out in the open air, and forbade all present to look back at them. A switch of white thorn from Janus was placed where a little window gave light to the chamber. After that, the birds are said not to have bothered the cradle further, the old color came back to the child.

The goddess saves Proca by substituting a pig for the infant and elaborately circumscribing the threshold areas of the house.

This latter part of the ritual requires explanation, since many scholars have labeled Ovid's association of Carna with *cardines* a case of mistaken identity for the goddess Cardea.[47] This may be true, but Ovid is clear that the goddess' dominion over thresholds and doorways is the primary factor in her ability to ward off the *striges*. In many cultures, demons are thought to lurk in liminal places, so that the control of such places is of vital importance in averting evil forces.[48] Rather than speculating on the nature of the pre-Ovidian Carna, we might do as well to take the poet at his word. The reason that she has such power, in fact, can be understood by considering the exact fashion in which she was granted this dominion. In the vignette immediately preceding the Proca legend, Ovid recounts Carna's rape by Janus (*Fast.* 6.105–30, oddly called by Fowler "a pretty folk-tale"[49]), after which she is told *ius pro concubitu nostro tibi cardinis esto,* "in exchange for our copulation, let the control of the hinge be yours" (*Fast.* 6.127). When we take into account the erotic symbolism of the

[47]Cf. Fowler 1899: 131; Wissowa 1912: 107 n. 3; Frazer 1929: 4.141f.; Bömer 1958: 2.343; Scullard 1981: 128.

[48]As Johnston 1991 has noted, demons are thought in many cultures to lurk in liminal places, so that the control of such places is of vital importance in averting evil forces.

[49]Fowler 1899: 131.

cardo (cf. Hor. *Carm.* 1.25.3–6; Prop. 1.16.26), the crude sexual connotations in Janus' remark become clear: belatedly Janus gives her the means to guard her gateways.[50] With this story in mind, it is easier to see how her elaborate rituals about the doors and windows are of use in protecting Proca from the *striges*: her control of liminal space is a way of counteracting bodily invasion.

In Roman culture, there were various ways in which a person could be represented by a house.[51] Artemidorus (4.30) notes how, in dream imagery, a man might be symbolized by his house, and Plautus gives Philolaches a long soliloquy on the same theme in the *Mostellaria* (84–157).[52] To even the most philosophical minds, the afflictions of the body could occur in architectural terms, as when Lucretius asks why we should not believe

> atque ideo tanta mutatum putre ruina
> conciderit corpus, penitus quia mota loco sunt
> fundamenta, foras manante anima usque per artus
> perque viarum omnis flexus, in corpore qui sunt,
> atque foramina? (3.584–88)

> that the body, now altered, falls into ruin and crumbles, since the foundations are shaken loose from their deep roots, with the soul seeping out through the limbs, through all the tortuous passageways that are in the body, and through the chinks?[53]

This expression of Epicurean atomic theory in folk imagery is of great use to us in comprehending Carna's protection of Proca's viscera. Together with this Lucretian metaphor connecting domestic with corporeal images, we might

[50]For the association of doors with access to mistresses in Roman thought, see Copley 1956: 28–42 and Hallett 1980: 109–11. On a larger scale, we might compare the story of Danaë's seduction by Zeus (Apollod. 2.4.1) as well as the folk-tale of Rapunzel. In both stories, the woman's seclusion in an inaccessible chamber symbolizes her virginity; the lover's furtive entrance into the chamber represents the loss of virginity.

[51]Political examples come readily to mind, e.g., Clodius' destruction of Cicero's house in 58 B.C.E. as an attempt to efface his enemy's memory (see generally Cicero's *De domo sua*). Likewise, when Augustus in 15 B.C.E. leveled the mansion bequeathed to him by Vedius Pollio, he did so as a way of deliberately eradicating a conspicuous symbol of luxury inconsistent with the image he had fashioned for himself (Ov. *Fast.* 6.642–48), cf. Zanker 1988: 137.

[52]On Philolaches' speech, see Leach 1969 for discussion of the relationship of the imagery in this speech to the themes of the play as a whole.

[53]On the metaphorical usage of boundaries in Lucretian thought and language, see the illuminating remarks of Segal 1990: 94–114, esp. 109–13 for discussion of the cited passage.

consider stories of modern-day African witches. Discussing the Tshonga wizards of Mozambique, for example, Henri Junod writes:

> The wizard...tries to penetrate into the hut by the door, finds it closed, ...flies to the crown of the hut and descends through it into the hut of the enemy, calmly sleeping on his mat. Then he proceeds to the bewitching operation, and the poor bewitched man is condemned to die. "His shadow only remains." They also say: "The corpse only has been left, his true self has been stolen and eaten." They have ravished him (like a feather taken away by the wind). He will get up in the morning, die some days later; but what will die is only his shadow. He himself has been killed during that dreadful night. He has been eaten already.... One of my informants [said]...that what the sorcerer is taking in him to eat is the inside, the bowels; the external frame only remains, and the man will die soon![54]

Readily to be seen in the Tshonga evidence is the way in which the attack on the person in the house prefigures the attack on the inner organs: in the instance above, all that is left is an empty "external frame." As with the *striges* of the Proca legend, these African wizards illicitly enter their victims' houses in order to assault the inner organs of the people inside. The penetration of the boundaries marking the household's outer limits is recapitulated in the penetration of the victim's bodily margins. Some sense of this belief is conveyed in Ovid's construction of the line first depicting the attack: *in thalamos venere Procae. Proca natus in illis*, "they came into Proca's chamber. Proca, born in those...." (*Fast.* 6.143). Proca is twice represented in the center of the line, bounded on either side by phrases beginning with *in.*

Carna's reinforcement of the liminal spaces of the house can be seen as a way of protecting the physical borders of the body: she sharply defines inside from out in order to thwart such in-between creatures as the *striges* (a power

[54]H. A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, cited by Lévy-Bruhl 1923: 246f. (On the relationship of Junod to Arnold Van Gennep, the originator of the concept of marginality, see discussion of Bremmer 1979: 12f.) The illicit manner by which the Tshonga wizard makes entrance into his victim's hut can be readily paralleled in other cultural contexts: e.g., the Ibo witches of Nigeria transform themselves into insects tiny enough to enter tightly closed houses at night for the purposes of biting people (Parrinder 1963: 145f.). Consider also British stories of witches entering houses as bees and other insects (Kittredge 1956: 179f.). Closer in time and place to our story are the various late antique Greek legends of St. Sisinnios and the demon Gello recorded by Gaster 1928, esp. 1016 and 1022: when Sisinnios enters the well-fortified dwelling where his sister Meletia and her newborn baby have hidden themselves, the demon changes into a clod of earth or a millet-grain, clings to the saint's horse, and so sneaks in to harm the child.

given to her by Janus, the liminal god *par excellence*). Seen in this way, her offering of *exta...de porca cruda bimenstra,* "the raw innards of a two-month-old piglet" (*Fast.* 6.158) can be better understood. She brings the pig's entrails out from its body and leaves them for the *striges* to consume, and lest there be any doubt, she leaves *prosecta sub aethere,* "the cut-out innards out in the open air" (*Fast.* 6.163). But this final inversion of inside and out must remain hidden from view, and thus Carna forbids all present from looking back (*Fast.* 6.164).[55] A rejection of this inversion is reaffirmed every year in the custom of eating bacon—cooked, not raw, pig flesh—a meal that represents a marked contradistinction to the upside-down behavior of the *striges.*[56]

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In Carna's offering on behalf of Proca's life, we find a familiar sort of substitution rite. It is important point to bear in mind what makes such rites work, namely, the language of the ritual itself. Looking closely at lines 160 and 161, just after Carna has begun her prayer, we find her saying *parcite: pro parvo victima parva cadit / cor pro corde, precor, pro...*The proliferation of syllables *pro*, *par*, *pre*, *cor*, and *ca* is truly striking; indeed, of these eleven words, only one does not participate in the phonetic play, and that word, significantly enough, is *victima*, the status of which is being transferred from infant to piglet, from Proca to *porca*. Indeed, we have been primed for such a metathesis involving the letter "R" in the name of the nymph performing the ritual, Carna, who was also called Cranäe. Furthermore, we see more clearly how the principle of inversion that stands behind the story generally is echoed even in the small but important detail of reversing a pair of letters.[57]

[55]The custom of averting the eyes from offerings to dangerous powers is, of course, widespread in the Mediterranean; cf. Frazer 1929: 4.144. That such a practice can have meaning in context as well, however, is a point too often overlooked. See my comments at n. 80.

[56]Raw *versus* cooked is, of course, one of Lévi-Strauss' central binary antitheses. The manner in which this distinction applied to Roman cuisine has been discussed by Corbier 1989, esp. 237–39, who notes that, according to Dio 76.1, at the wedding feast of Caracalla and Plautilla in 202 C.E., dishes were served either "in royal fashion" (cooked) or "in barbarian fashion" (raw, and even live!). Cf. Pl. *Aul.* 3.2.15, *quid tu curas, utrum crudum an coctum edim*, "What do you care if I eat it raw or cooked?"

[57]My great thanks to Joshua Katz for bringing these observations to my attention. Professor David Sansone points out to me that Livy too puns on Proca's name (1.3.9f.): *Proca deinde regnat. is Numitorem atque Amulium procreat.*

Similar sorts of transference rites, akin to but not identical with scapegoating,[58] were common in the Greco-Roman world, though few involved pigs.[59] Turning our glance to the Near East, however, we find much compelling evidence. The pig played a central role in several Hittite substitution rites: in the Tunnawi ritual, for example, a black pig (together with a black dog) was swung around over the worshipers' heads in order to absorb impurities and then burned.[60] In the Mastigga ritual, a rite for resolving household quarrels, the following events would take place:

> The Old Woman takes a small pig, she presents it to them and speaks as follows: "See! It has been fattened with grass (and) grain. Just as this one shall not see the sky and shall not see the (other) small pigs again...even so let the evil curses not see the sacrificers either!"
>
> She waves the small pig over them, and then they kill it. They dig a hole in the ground and put it down into it. They put a sacrificial loaf down with it, she also pours out a libation of wine and they level the ground.[61]

Even to the modern reader, the death of a dizzy pig seems a small price to pay for a little domestic peace.

With these Hittite parallels some scholars have compared the Biblical account of the Gadarene demoniac healed by Christ, who sends the invasive evil spirits into an unsuspecting herd of swine nearby. Frightened by this event, the local population then asks Jesus to leave. Scholars have long been perplexed by the presence of swine in the story: the people confronting Jesus appear to be Jews, but surely no Jewish community would raise pigs (although it is true that at Luke 15.15 the prodigal son feeds the pigs of a citizen "in a far country"

[58]Kümmel 1968, esp. 311–15. Professor Jack Sasson tells me that similar customs are still practiced in the Syrian Jewish community: a short time before a woman is going to give birth, an animal such as a wolf or chicken is brought into the house and called by the name which will be given to the child. When the child is born, he or she is simply called "the wolf," or such, for the first weeks of its life. Later the animal is driven out of the house or killed. The point of the custom is to fool any demons into doing evil to the animal rather than to the child, and in this way to be rid of them. On scapegoating generally in classical antiquity, see Burkert 1979: 59–77, and Bremmer 1983.

[59] In classical antiquity, few references to "scape swine" can be found. See De Vaux 1972: 252–69, and von Rohr Sauer 1968, esp. 203, neither of whom knows of any but sacrificial pigs in the classical world. Professor Sarah Iles Johnston points out to me, however, that at the Korythalia in Sparta a piglet was slain by a nurse on behalf of her charge. See Calame 1997: 169f.

[60]Moyer 1983: 31.

[61]A. Goetze, cited by Moyer 1983: 31f.

[15.13]). Rather than hypothesizing the actual existence of such a community, or assuming, as an alternative, that the swine-owners were Gentiles, with whom Jesus then conversed in Greek, it seems better to suppose that the story is a fiction incorporating the ritual practices of surrounding Near Eastern peoples.[62]

Of particular interest in regard to the legend of Proca are a number of substitution rites practiced by the ancient Mesopotamians. One Babylonian incantation used for deterring demons by such substitution, for instance, reads as follows:

> Give the pig in his stead, and give the flesh as his flesh, the blood as his blood, and let him take it; its heart...give as his heart, and let him take it.[63]

It is worth considering this text alongside Carna's offering of a pig, and the request that the *striges* take *cor pro corde, precor, pro fibris...fibras*, "a heart for a heart, entrails for entrails" (*Fast.* 6.160–62). We find noteworthy correspondences not only in the replacement of a possible human victim of demonic assault by a pig, but, furthermore, in the singling out of particular bodily organs—especially the heart—as targets of attack.[64] Still more remarkable in connection with our Roman evidence is the specific goddess to whom the Babylonians offered this porcine sacrifice as a substitute. As Roland De Vaux notes in his study of pigs in Palestine and the ancient Near East:

> The pig was especially employed against the demoness Lamashtu, the enemy of pregnant women, young mothers, and their babies.... In

[62]The story of the Gadarene demoniac, as contained in Luke 8.30–33 (*RSV*), follows:

> Jesus then asked him [the demoniac], "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside; and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them leave. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

Cf. Mark 5.9–13, and Matthew 8.28–34 (where two men rather than one are afflicted with demons, and the name "Legion" is not recorded). On the question of the location of this miracle (Gadara or Gerasa), see the remarks of McRay 1992: 2.991, s.v. "Gerasenes." On the problem of the swine, see Allison and Davies 1991: 2.82f. For discussion of the story in general, see Craghan 1968. On the scapegoating elements inherent in the tale, see the discussion of Girard 1986: 165–83.

[63]R.C. Thompson, *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia*, London 1904, tablet N, col. 3, 10–15, vol. 2, cited by Craghan 1968: 531.

[64]See Versnel 1985: 266–68, with older bibliography.

> the rite of exorcism, a piglet is immolated and its heart placed on the mouth of the figure of Lamashtu; acts of anointing are performed with the fat of a white pig, and in this way Lamashtu is consigned to her subterranean domain.[65]

The relationship of the goddess Lamashtu with the Greek child-stealing demon Lamia has been discussed in recent years by Walter Burkert,[66] as well as by David R. West, who notes succinctly, "It is very probable that the Hellenic daemon Lamia is an evolute of Lamashtu."[67] It is difficult, of course, to establish direct linkages between supernatural figures in different civilizations, especially characters as vague as Lamia and Lamashtu: while these demons perform similar functions in their respective cultures and share a superficial resemblance in name, there is no compelling evidence for accepting any association between them.[68] If, however, an amulet discovered in Poggio Civitate does in fact display a Lamashtu-figure, as has been suggested, there may be good reason to believe that the Babylonian demon was known on the Italian peninsula by the seventh century B.C.E.[69] In that case, we might plausibly suggest that the ritual use of pigs as substitutes described by both the Near Eastern texts and Ovid is not simply a matter of coincidence but rather of historical connection. Perhaps the legend of the infant Proca attacked by *striges* and spared by the substitution of a pig has its roots in Mesopotamian ritual.

[65]De Vaux 1972: 257. Cf. von Rohr Sauer 1968: 203.

[66]Burkert 1992: 82–87. On Lamashtu, see Farber 1980; for Lamia, see Fontenrose 1959: 100–104. On the rites for driving away child-afflicting demons, see Farber 1989 *passim.*

[67]West 1991: 366.

[68]See Johnston 1995: 381, who prefers the etymology given by Σ to Ar. *V.* 1035: Lamia is "she who swallows down" (380). But see West 1991: 368, who asserts that "Lamia is a shortened Gk. form of Lamaštu. The termination *-shtu* may have dropped off because the phoneme *ùs* is unknown in Greek." Perhaps Lamia is a derivation of Lamashtu fashioned by *ex post facto* folk etymology, like, for instance, the Roman monster Cacus, whose name was re-interpreted as Greek κακός, according to Serv. ad *A.* 8.190, in an obvious bit of ancient etymological retrojection.

[69]The amulet in question was first published by Philips 1978, who identified the figure on it as an "ithy-phallic man [who] hops to the right, his knees bent and his arms raised" (358). But Patzek 1988: 222 has re-interpreted the representation: "Es stellt in meinen Augen eindeutig ein Lamaštu-Amulett dar, obwohl es von den Ausgräbern, vermutlich aus Verlegenheit und in Unkenntis der orientalischen Ikonographie, nicht dahingehend gedeutet wurde." Patzek's view has been accepted by Burkert 1992: 83 and 198 n. 12.

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In a larger sense, however, the historic relationship to the Mesopotamian evidence of the Proca legend and its associated customs need not necessarily be charted. As Johnston has rightly pointed out in regard to Greek demonological beliefs, the search for analogies is far more profitable than the search for genealogies.[70] Just as the student of Roman literature is no longer satisfied with *Quellenforschung*, the student of Roman religion should not be content with tracing the curious items of the Roman calendar to their diverse sources and periods. Indeed, some elements of this complex of legend and custom are better elucidated when considered in the narrower context of the Roman year.

While the Roman calendar was in no sense a liturgical year, a certain consistency bound the procession of festivals together as a religious whole. This thematic harmony, however, was not always straightforward, and at times the picture could be quite sharply refracted. The repetition of certain themes or elements throughout the year allowed important cultural ideas to be viewed from several perspectives, as Mary Beard articulates well:

> It was precisely the Roman calendar's reliance on building up associations and images on a paradigmatic model outside any determining narrative that gave the individual festival a fluid meaning in relation to the others in a sequence.[71]

We get some sense of the way this paradigmatic process might have worked with regard to the Proca legend when we consider that the first of June was also the *dies natalis* of the temple of Juno Moneta. According to one aetiology of the Juno Moneta temple preserved by Cicero (*Div.* 1.101), a mysterious voice demanded an expiatory sacrifice of a pregnant sow during an earthquake. The story recalls the *porca* offered to the *striges* on behalf of the infant's life: in each case, the death of a pig averts disaster. But, of course, no Roman could think of this temple—as indeed, no classicist can—without recalling the tale of the sacred geese whose honking woke the sleeping citizens during the Gauls' invasion *circa* 390 B.C.E. (Liv. 5.47.3f.).[72] The juxtaposition of the tales is

[70]Johnston 1995: 381.

[71]Beard 1987: 8.

[72]On the *dies natalis*, see Ov. *Fast.* 6.183f. with Bömer's note; Fowler 1899: 129f.; and Scullard 1981: 127. On geese and the Gallic invasion, see Liv. 5.47.3f. with Ogilvie's note. Writing on the cult of Juno Moneta, Ziolkowski 1993, esp. 206f., notes the popularity of the

illuminating: on the one hand, the Proca legend is a frightening story of strident witches who fly into the house at night; on the other, the same day is associated with another set of noisy birds warning against nocturnal invaders (and so might summon up a more reassuring image, particularly for the Roman child to whom such stories were probably told).[73] Here it is worth recalling that, as Macrobius writes (1.12.22, 31), Brutus performed a sacrifice to Carna on June first to commemorate the expulsion of the Tarquins.[74] It would appear that, in the Kalends of June, we find variations on the larger theme of driving away dangerous elements from both the physical body and the body politic.

These observations take on deeper meaning when we go on to consider the *Kalendae Fabariae* in relation to the festivals that it precedes and anticipates. The Matralia on June eleventh, for instance, the unusual women's festival celebrated in honor of Mater Matuta, provides certain paradigmatic resonances: the displacement of parental concern noted in the Carna legend (*Fast.* 6.153; see above, pp. 8–9) is echoed in the prescribed words of the Matralia prayer, in which mothers seek the well-being not of their own children, but rather of their nieces and nephews (Plu. *Quaest. Rom.* 17). Indeed, as Ovid writes (*Fast.* 6.559–61) concerning the goddess:

> non tamen hanc pro stirpe sua pia mater adoret:
> ipsa parum felix visa fuisse parens.
> alterius prolem melius mandabitis illi.
>
> Yet, do not let a dutiful mother pray to her (i.e., Mater Matuta) for her own child's sake, for she did not appear to be a lucky parent. Rather, entrust to her someone else's child.

But along with the prayer must be considered the votive items discovered at the temple of Mater Matuta in Satricum, which include not only statuettes of the mother-and-child variety but also *ex voto* models of the inner organs of the human body.[75] Such votive items indicate concern both for the health of children as well as for the well-being of the viscera, a set of associated ideas expressed also by the legend of June first with respect to Carna.

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legend among scholars. Juno was apparently fond of noisy birds like geese and crows and showy ones like peacocks; cf. Fowler 1899: 130 n. 2.

[73]On stories told to Roman children, see Wiedemann 1989: 145f. and Wiseman 1989: 129–37.

[74]The *sacrum* was supposedly performed on the Caelian Hill. Cf. Tert. *Ad nat.* 2.9 concerning a *fanum Carnae* on the Caelian.

[75]Maule and Smith 1959: 74f.

Still more revealing is a comparison of the customs of June first with the religious atmosphere of May. The major ritual activity of the latter month concerns the removal of frightening supernatural elements from the sphere of ordinary human life.[76] In particular, we might contrast the customs of the *Kalendae Fabariae* with the rites of the Lemuria (May ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth), a festival dedicated to bringing *inferias tacitis manibus*, "offerings to the silent ghosts" (*Fast.* 5.422).[77] The manner in which this was accomplished is clearly described by Ovid: in the middle of the night, the worshiper (thought by most scholars to be the *paterfamilias*) takes up black beans and, turning his face away, throws them, as he intones *haec ego mitto / his...redimo meque meosque fabis*, "these I cast, I redeem me and mine with these beans" (*Fast.* 5.434f.).[78] Noting the usage of beans on both the Lemuria and the Kalends of June, and taking further note of their function in other rituals of the dead, Wissowa concluded that the goddess Carna must have been a

[76]The thematic coherence of the ceremonies of May has been the subject of much illuminating study: see Holland 1961: 322f.; Harmon 1978: 1455–59, and Nagy 1985, esp. 20–22, all of whom draw connections between the Sacra Argeorum of May fourteenth or fifteenth, in which straw dolls were tossed into the Tiber, and other festivals, notably the Lemuria. Surely to be viewed in this light is the procession of the Ambarvalia, celebrated on May 29 in both the public and the private spheres, during which a *suovetaurilia* was led around the fields and sacrificed, in order to encourage prosperity and, as Cato specifies, to ward off destruction (*Agr.* 141.2).

[77]The Lemuria is marked on several of the ancient calendars, suggesting a public festival, though all we know of it (from Ov. *Fast.* 5.419–92) pertains to domestic ritual.

[78]Interpretation of the exact manner in which the beans are sent forth on this occasion provides an interesting glance at the history of Roman religion scholarship. Ovid's original verses at *Fasti* 5. 436f. read *vertitur et nigras accipit ante fabas / aversus iacit; sed dum iacit, 'haec ego mitto...'*, "He turns and first receives black beans, and throws them with face averted; while he throws them, he says, 'These I cast...' " (cf. Var. *ap.* Non. 197L, *quibus temporibus in sacris fabam iactunt noctu*). Now, in recounting Ovid's description, Fowler 1899: 109 writes, "He has black beans in his mouth, and these he spits as he walks,..." It might be argued that, because the goddess Tacita takes beans in her mouth during the Feralia (Ov. *Fast.* 2.576), so the worshiper on the Lemuria must do the same. But, simply put, there is no evidence in Ovid's text at all for spitting. Yet in this error Fowler is followed by Scullard 1981: 118: "The head of the family gets up at midnight...and walks through the house, spitting out black beans from his mouth, with head averted, saying..." While Fowler may be forgiven for misreading, Scullard's reproduction of the error is most lamentable, since his is a standard handbook for many classicists. In this same tradition, Rose 1941: 90 writes, "Then he turns and takes black beans in his mouth, apparently nine of them." His further musings, that the *paterfamilias* "feeds the *lemures* beans...and makes them more tasty by putting them first in his own mouth, so that they shall have the flavour of man" (93), are utterly unfounded.

chthonic goddess.[79] His identification is imprecise, however, since for each day the particular usage of beans is quite different: beans are eaten on June first and, by contrast, are thrown on the Lemuria. The distinction is not insignificant, for the treatment of food on both days is highly significant. The *striges* and *lemures* are supernatural creatures who have come to feast in the household; the food they are given is specifically marked as not being for human consumption and furthermore may no longer even be looked upon by human eyes.[80]

As we have already noted, the treatment of bacon on June first involves culinary inversion; the rejection of such inversion is intended as a rebuff to hostile spirits. The threat in the story belonging to the Kalends (in which a piglet's viscera are left out for consumption) is ritually undone and set right through the meal. But beans are absent from the story, although the day is named for them. Unlike the inversion involving pig meat, the treatment of beans is not self-contained, taking place all on the same day. Rather, the beans that are such a significant element of the Lemuria rite reappear in altered context on the

[79]Wissowa 1912: 236, who, in support of his contention, cites a line from *CIL* 3.3893 that reads *uti rosas Carnar[iis] ducant,* "in order to bring roses on the Carnaria." Since roses are frequently employed in the worship of the dead, he writes, "so schwindet jeder Zweifel an der Zugehörigkeit der Göttin Carna zu diesem Kreise." Not entirely—see the objections of Pettazzoni (1940) 164–67 (in which he is supported by DeGrassi, *Inscr. It.* 13.2: 464), and those of Fowler 1899: 131 (responding to an earlier version of Wissowa's argument). On the roses, Dumézil (1970) 1.386 elaborates:

> Does not this simply indicate the desire of the deceased, in his love of life, that each year on the festival of the goddess who *vitalibus humanis praeest*, the flower which most closely resembles the complexion of the living cheeks should be offered to his shade as a poetic recalling of his happy years in life, or even in the hope of some kind of reanimation in the other world?

His point is lyrical but unconvincing.

[80]To the remarks above, we should add the internal use of inverted symbolism in the Lemuria, which has gone unnoticed: according to Ovid, the worshipper must make certain that *habent gemini vincula nulla pedes*, "his two feet have no knots" (432), and that *signaque dat digitis medio cum pollice iunctis*, "he gives the sign with his thumb in the middle of his closed fingers" (433). In discussing this point, Frazer 1929: 4.46f. (and those following him), noted the principle of sympathetic magic in the ban on knots, and identified the hand-signal as *la fica*, "the fig," an apotropaic gesture against the evil eye. Frazer was surely right, and yet he failed to see the importance of the juxtaposition of these two activities within their immediate context: the fisting of the hand is an inversion of the usual Roman practice, which dictates that the palms be open to the sky in prayer (e.g., Hor. *Carm.* 3.23.1, *caelo supinas si tuleris manus*. Cf. Verg. *A.* 1.93, *duplicis tendens ad sidera palmas*.). This gesture, a type of "knotting," counterbalances the unbinding of the feet, which are now "open" to the ground. Seen in this way, the pose struck by the *paterfamilias* is a ritual reversal of normal prayer posture, one that is highly appropriate, given that the *lemures* are chthonic rather than celestial.

Kalendae Fabariae, a reminder of both an evil supernatural presence and a method of conquering it.

As Ovid explains, the unlucky season initiated in mid-May with the Lemuria is brought to an end with the Vestalia of mid-June (cf. *Fast.* 6.223–28). Between the two comes the Kalends of June, connected with the gloomy aspects of May while anticipating the happier second half of June. But such issues point to ideas beyond the scope of this paper: it is enough to say that the teasing out of any strand implicit in one Roman holiday leads to consideration of the network of religious and historical issues that make up the entire calendar.

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In conclusion, let us return to the questions posed at the beginning of this essay concerning the legend of Proca, the custom of eating bacon and beans, and the relationship of the legend and custom to each other and to their joint place in the calendar. At the center of the story is the figure of the *strix,* who, as a demon, reveals her utterly perverse nature by attacking children, harming those whom she should instead cherish. Against this hostile, inverted creature, Carna stands as protector, setting things right by literally distinguishing inside from out: her treatment of the thresholds and windows of the household undoes the evil of the witches who, in Petronius' words, *quod sursum est, deorsum faciunt*, "turn everything upside-down" (63.9). The meal to be eaten on this day underscores the point of the legend: bacon is eaten as an emphatically normal sort of food, unlike the raw pork given to the *striges.* One should also eat some beans, not throw them, as was done only a few weeks before on the Lemuria as a way to drive off evil spirits. But, even as the Lemuria was meant to repel the ancestral dead from the *domus* and the other rituals of May were intended to remove impurities from the city, so the story of Carna and the *striges* emphasized the lifting of threat from the youngest and most vulnerable members of the household, and the promise of good health for all.

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