

**Zeitschrift:** Museum Helveticum : schweizerische Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft = Revue suisse pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique = Rivista svizzera di filologia classica

**Herausgeber:** Schweizerische Vereinigung für Altertumswissenschaft

**Band:** 44 (1987)

**Heft:** 1

  

**Artikel:** The nones of July and Roman weather magic

**Autor:** Robertson, Noel

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-34271>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 23.01.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

# The Nones of July and Roman Weather Magic

By Noel Robertson, St. Catharines, Ontario

## I. The problem

At Rome festivals are few in the month of July, as the heat of summer brings a lull in the countryman's routine. But near the beginning of the month we find a ritual complex as interesting as any in the calendar – the Poplifugia (n.pl.), “flights of the people”, in which a crowd of citizens go out noisily to Goat's Marsh in the Campus Martius; and the Nonae Caprotinae, also called *ancillarum feriae*, “festival of maidservants”, in which young women of this class, and subsequently free-born women too, keep holiday – the maidservants dress in finery and go about begging and sporting and stage a mock combat; then both maidservants and free-born women feast and tipple, again with a wanton air, and work magic at a certain wild fig-tree.

These rites survived to the end of the Republic and gave rise in the usual way to several aetiological legends concerning either the disappearance of Romulus or the menaces of some invading army. The legends are best known to us from Plutarch, but they had been handled earlier in many lost works – by annalists including Piso, and by Varro in the *Antiquitates rerum divinarum* as well as in the surviving portion of *De lingua latina*; a cognate rite and legend were seemingly treated in a *fabula praetexta*. Since our sources for the legends also remark on the ritual, and since moreover the ritual is well imprinted in the legends, we are in a position to know what was done each year at the Poplifugia and the Nonae Caprotinae.

Yet the accounts presented in modern handbooks and special studies are quite inadequate; indeed they are demonstrably false. It is not simply that the significance of the ritual is disputed (this we expect), but that the ritual itself has not been properly reconstructed. We are told with full assurance that the Poplifugia and the Nonae Caprotinae are separate occasions, falling on the 5th and the 7th July respectively; we may then be told that certain elements (the shouting out of names like Marcus, Lucius, Gaius, and the rendezvous at Goat's Marsh) belong to either one; at all events we are made to think that the two occasions deal with unrelated matters, the Poplifugia perhaps with government or war, the Nonae Caprotinae perhaps with the fertility of women or of nature<sup>1</sup>. It is not so. Our sources uniformly state or imply that the Poplifugia

<sup>1</sup> For the Poplifugia, see G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*<sup>2</sup> (Munich 1912) 116; G. Devoto, *Poplifugia*, *Atti del regio Istituto Veneto di scienze, lettere e arti* 90 (1931) 1075–1086; H. J. Rose, *Two Roman Rites*, *CQ* s. 1, 28 (1934) [156–158] 157–158; C. Koch, *Der*

and the Nonae Caprotinae take place on the same day and form a single festival<sup>2</sup>.

The present paper aims first to reconstruct the ritual, using only direct evidence and resorting to no assumptions of any kind; and then to draw out the original meaning of the ritual. Some may regard these aims as a narrow antiquarian concern. But it seems to me that a festival like ours is an important and vivid part of Rome's social history. It is moreover bound up with the earliest discernible form of the calendar and with some of the earliest excavated remains in the Forum: perhaps it can tell us something about the obscure beginnings of Roman religion.

## II. The legends

The first step is to examine the aetiological legends. The ritual of the Poplifugia and the Nonae Caprotinae was thought to re-enact an historical event of long ago. Different observers spoke of six such events – 1. the disappearance of Romulus in the Comitium; 2. his disappearance in the Campus Martius; 3. an attack by Latin neighbours, when the Romans were put to flight;

*römische Juppiter* (Frankfurt 1937) 92–96; V. Basanoff, *Regifugium: la fuite du roi, histoire et mythe* (Paris 1943) 115–165; W. Kraus, *Poplifugia*, RE 22, 1 (1953) 74–78; K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (Munich 1960) 128–129; W. Burkert, *Caesar and Romulus-Quirinus*, Historia 11 (1962) [356–376] 365–371; R. E. A. Palmer, *Roman Religion and Roman Empire* (Philadelphia 1974) 7–17; F. Coarelli, *La doppia tradizione sulla morte di Romolo e gli auguracula dell'Arx e del Quirinale*, in: *Gli Etruschi e Roma, incontro di studio in onore di M. Pallottino* (Rome 1981) 173–188; H. H. Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic* (London 1981) 159; Coarelli, *Il foro Romano. Periodo arcaico* (Rome 1984) 188–196. For the Nonae Caprotinae, see Wissowa, *Caprotina*, RE 3, 2 (1899) 1551–1553; W. F. Otto, *Juno. Beiträge zum Verhältnisse der ältesten und wichtigsten Thatsachen ihres Kultes*, Philologus 64 (1905) [161–223] 185–190; Wissowa (1912) 184; E. Pais, *Un bassorilievo di Capri e la cerimonia delle nonae caprotinae*, Atti della regia Accademia di archeologia, lettere e belle arti di Napoli, n.s. 4 (1916) 75–81; C. Thulin, *Iuno*, RE 10, 1 (1918) 1117; U. Pestalozza, *Iuno Caprotina*, Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni 9 (1933) 38–71; S. Weinstock, *Nonae Caprotinae*, RE 17, 1 (1936) 849–859; Basanoff, *Nonae Caprotinae*, Latomus 8 (1949) 209–216; J. Gagé, *La magie sociale dans l'ancienne Rome*, RHR 153 (1958) 119–122; Latte (1960) 106–107; F. Bömer, *Untersuchungen über die Religion der Sklaven in Griechenland und Rom 3: Die wichtigsten Kulte der griechischen Welt* (AbhMainz 1961, 4) 186–188; V. L. Johnson, *Natalis urbis and Principium anni*, TAPA 91 (1960) 109–120; W. Bühler, *Die doppelte Erzählung des Aitons der Nonae Caprotinae bei Plutarch*, Maia 14 (1962) 271–282; Johnson, *The prehistoric Roman Calendar*, AJP 84 (1963) 28–35; M. Lejeune, *Caprotina*, REL 45 (1967) 194–202; P. Drossart, *Le théâtre aux Nonae Caprotinae (à propos de Varron, De lingua latina, 6, 18)*, RPhil 48 (1974) 54–64; id., *Nonae Caprotinae: la fausse capture des Aurores*, RHR 185 (1974) 129–139; G. Dumézil, *Fêtes romaines d'été et d'automne* (Paris 1975) 271–283; G. Radke, *Die Götter Altitaliens*<sup>2</sup> (Munich 1979) 80–81. 352; Scullard (1981) 161–163. Johnson's articles of 1960 and 1963 are a curiosity, for he assigns the Poplifugia and the Nonae Caprotinae to March, not July – but still to the 5th and 7th of the month. These works will be cited hereafter by author's name and date of publication.

<sup>2</sup> This view of the dating was affirmed long ago by A. Schwegler, *Römische Geschichte* 1 (Tübingen 1853) 532–535; but it was soon contradicted by Mommsen, Preller, and others, and has not been heard since.

4. the same attack, when the Romans made a successful sally; 5. an attack by Etruscans, when the Romans were put to flight; 6. the Gallic invasion, when the Romans made a successful sally. To these events we should add another which explains the worship of Juno Caprotina – 7. something or other that was done long ago in Latium at large. Of course there were more than seven versions of these events. The disappearance of Romulus in particular was often recounted so as to commend some partisan view of Romulus' character, or of the role of the Senate, or of the popular intelligence. These nuances do not concern us here, only the correspondence that was alleged between the event and the ritual. We shall take the seven events in the order given above.

1. We have three accounts of Romulus' disappearance in the Comitium, and also passing mention of the place of death or burial: Dion., Ant. Rom. 2, 56, 4; Plut., Rom. 27, 6; [Plut.], Par. Min. 32 B, 313 D = "Aristobulus" FGrHist 830 F 1; cf. Fest. p. 184 Lindsay<sup>1</sup>; [Acro], Porph. Hor., Ep. 16, 13 = Var., Ant. div. fr. 215 Cardauns.

Dionysius first relates the disappearance in the Comitium; then, as a version given by "others", the disappearance in the Campus Martius (2, 56, 5). Strictly speaking, Dionysius associates only the second version with the Poplifugia, ὄχλου φυγή, for the festival is said to commemorate the flight of the people from their place of assembly (ibid.); his first version does not include an assembly or a flight. Plutarch, however, begins by dating the disappearance to the Nones of July, when it is re-enacted with extensive ritual (Rom. 27, 4); then he gives the two versions as Dionysius does; afterwards the day of the disappearance is said to be called both Poplifugia, ὄχλου φυγή, and Nonae Caprotinae (29, 2). Further on, after relating the attack by Latin neighbours, he associates the second version of Romulus' disappearance with the Nonae Caprotinae (29, 9. 11). [Plutarch] does not mention the ritual at all.

It is quite possible that Dionysius, Plutarch, and [Plutarch] all draw upon the same source, who would then be a Roman annalist. True, the setting is described in different terms, as between the Senate and the shrine of Vulcan, and [Plutarch] says more of Romulus' demagoguery than the others do; but the differences may be due to selection and embroidery. For our purpose it is enough to observe that the event is consistently rendered.

The story runs as follows. Romulus is set upon by the Senators within the Senate (Dionysius, [Plutarch]) or "in the shrine of Hephaestus" (Plutarch). They dismember him and each Senator conceals a piece of the body in his robe (Dionysius, Plutarch, [Plutarch]). They carry the pieces away (Dionysius, Plutarch) "and afterwards secretly bury them in the earth" (Dionysius). The place where Romulus died was marked by the *Niger Lapis* (Festus). It was said too that he was buried near the Rostra at a spot marked by two stone lions ([Acro], Porphyry, both citing Varro).

The shrine of Vulcan where Plutarch situates the murder lay near or "above" the Comitium, as we know both from literary sources and from the



epigraphic Fasti (apropos of the Volcanalia of 23rd August). It is plausibly identified with some existing remains beneath the existing *Niger Lapis* on the south side of the Comitium – viz. an altar, a column, a cippus bearing an early *lex sacra*, and a cache of votive pottery which includes an Attic black-figure scene of Hephaestus returning to Olympus<sup>3</sup>. The south-east side of the Comitium, next to these remains, is the presumed site of the Rostra. When Dionysius puts the murder ἐν τῷ βουλευτηρίῳ and [Plutarch] ἐν τῇ συγκλήτῳ βουλῇ, they doubtless mean, not the *curia Hostilia* on the opposite side of the Comitium, but (as in Plutarch) the shrine of Vulcan; for Dionysius has just mentioned that Romulus and Titus Tatius conducted meetings “in the shrine of Hephaestus a little above the agora” (2, 50, 2)<sup>4</sup>.

Other sources show that the *area Volcani* was an open-air shrine, and such are the actual remains. How then could the Senators perpetrate the murder without being seen? No one was watching. Plutarch introduces his second version, the disappearance in the Campus Martius, by saying, “Others think that the disappearance took place neither in the shrine of Hephaestus nor in the presence of the Senators alone”, μήτε μόνων τῶν βουλευτῶν παρόντων (Rom. 27, 6). When Romulus met his end in the Comitium, the people were not assembled nearby; nor did they now take to flight, for the only flight known to Plutarch occurs during the ritual in the Campus Martius<sup>5</sup>.

2. Plutarch tells us that Romulus’ disappearance in the Campus Martius is the preferred explanation of our ritual complex (Rom. 29, 11), and the surviving notices bear him out: Cic., Rep. 1 [16] 25; 2 [10] 17, 20; Liv. 1, 16, 1–4; Dion., Ant. Rom. 2, 56, 2, 5; Ov., Fast. 2, 491–496, cf. Met. 14, 823–824; Val. Max. 5, 3, 1; Plut., Rom. 27, 6–8; 29, 2–3, 11; Cam. 33, 9–10; Num. 2, 1–2; De fort. Rom. 8, 320 B–C; Flor., Epit. 1, 1, 16; App., Bell. civ. 2, 114; Solin. 1, 25; Cass. Dio fr. 6 Boiss.; De vir. ill. 2, 13; SHA Comm. 2.

As already said, this version is linked with the Poplifugia by Dionysius, and by Plutarch with both the Poplifugia and the Nonae Caprotinae. The public sacrifice at Goat’s Marsh is dated by Plutarch to “the fifth of the month, the day which they now call Nonae Caprotinae” (Num. 2, 1). Romulus’ disappearance is dated to the Nones of July by Cicero, Plutarch, Solinus, and SHA Comm.

Romulus is taken off in the Campus Martius, at a site called Goat’s Marsh.

<sup>3</sup> So Coarelli, *Il comizio dalle origini alla fine della repubblica*, ParPass 32 (1977) [166–238] 215–236; id. (1984) 161–188.

<sup>4</sup> In the early Republic, before the Rostra was built, the shrine of Vulcan was the vantage-point from which magistrates addressed the people (Dion. 6, 67, 2; 7, 17, 2; 11, 39, 1).

<sup>5</sup> The sequel in [Plutarch] does not belong to the festival aition. “The Romans ran with fire to the Senate-house”; news of Romulus’ epiphany is brought by “Aelius Pravus” – not by Julius Proculus, as in all other accounts; “the Romans accepted his story and withdrew.” For this exciting turn, which evokes the burning of the Senate-house after the death of Clodius, [Plutarch] himself deserves the credit, as also for the *Schwindelautor* Aristobulus, cited immediately after.

He was addressing the people, or else the army (Livy, Dionysius, *De vir. ill.*), or was dispensing justice (Ovid). Livy says that the Senators were at his side, and indeed this version like the other presupposes a gathering of Senators, for it is on the Senate collectively that the suspicion of murder falls (except in Dionysius). The occasion is sometimes described as a virtual meeting of the Senate (Valerius Maximus, Florus, Appian, Cassius Dio)<sup>6</sup>. Plutarch once treats it as a sacrifice: “Romulus was performing a certain public sacrifice outside the city at the so-called Goat’s Marsh, and there were present both the Senate and most of the people” (Num. 2, 1).

During the transaction at Goat’s Marsh the sky suddenly darkened. Some sources, the majority, speak of clouds and squalls (Livy, Dionysius, Ovid, Plutarch in Romulus, Camillus and Numa), others of a solar eclipse (Cicero, Plutarch in Camillus as an alternative view, and again in *De fort. Rom.*), or of storm and eclipse together (Florus, Cassius Dio). Romulus was lost to sight, and the people fled. When daylight returned, Romulus could not be found, and the people suspected that he had been secretly done to death by the Senators (Cicero, Livy, Ovid, Valerius Maximus, Plutarch in Romulus and Numa, Florus, Appian, Cassius Dio, *De vir. ill.*). Dismemberment is sometimes mentioned, as in the previous version (Livy, Valerius Maximus, Florus, Cassius Dio). As a rule the story concludes with Romulus’ epiphany, as reported by Julius Proculus; everyone recognizes that this is a separate aition of the cult of Quirinus. Dionysius as so often gives the story a rationalizing turn, and Romulus is slain not by Senators but by certain disaffected citizens.

Plutarch draws out the correspondence between the event and the commemorative ritual. The “rout” of the people, τροπή, and their “fright and disorder”, δέος καὶ ταραχή, are re-enacted when the celebrants go out from the city to sacrifice at Goat’s Marsh; they shout names like “Marcus”, “Lucius”, “Gaius”, as if calling to each other (Rom. 29, 2–3. 11, cf. Cam. 33, 9–10).

Goat’s Marsh, *caprae palus* or *caprae paludes* (Paul. Fest. p. 57 Lindsay<sup>1</sup>), can only be located by conjecture<sup>7</sup>. The actual marsh probably disappeared in

6 The Senators tore him apart in the Senate, says Valerius Maximus: *senatus ... in curia lacerauit*. Caesar’s assassins had Romulus in mind, says Appian, when they resolved to strike at a meeting of the Senate: χωρίον δ’ ἐπενόουν τὸ βουλευτήριον ὡς τῶν βουλευτῶν ... συνεπιληψομένων. In both cases the language could apply to the Comitium version just as well as to the Campus Martius version (only later does Appian situate the actual meeting in the Theatre of Pompey, i.e. in the Campus Martius); but the Campus Martius version, being more familiar, is more likely to be intended. Of the occasion in the Campus Martius Florus says “some think he was torn to pieces by the Senate”, *discerptum ... a senatu*. Of the same occasion (for we hear of storm and eclipse, and of the distraught people and army) Cassius Dio as rendered by Zonaras says that the Senators “gathered round him as he was speaking in the Senate and tore him apart and slew him”, περιέχοντες ἐν τῷ βουλευτηρίῳ δημηγοροῦντα διεσπάραξαν τε καὶ διέφθειραν.

7 Ovid uses the form *caprae* for the sake of the metre (*Fast.* 2, 491), and such was Ovid’s currency that the mss. of Plutarch have been altered in consequence: *Rom.* 27, 6, αἰγὸς ἢ ζορκὸς ἔλος; *Cam.* 33, 10, τὴν γὰρ αἶγα καπρίαν (l. κάπραν) καλοῦσιν.

the late Republic or the early Empire, when the Campus Martius was built up and beautified; it seems very doubtful that any memory survives in the later names *aedicula Capraria* and *vicus Caprarius*<sup>8</sup>. The usual notion has been that the marsh lay in the lowest part of the Campus, later occupied by the Pantheon<sup>9</sup>. But the evidence suggests that it was closer to the city, in the south-western area of the Campus.

Plutarch says that Romulus disappeared “outside the gate”, ἔξω πόλης (Cam. 33, 9); he also says that in the ritual re-enactment of the Latin attack the crowd of citizens go forth shouting “through the gate”, διὰ τῆς πόλης (Cam. 33, 7), or “round the gates”, περὶ τὰς πόλας (Rom. 29, 8). The gate in question is obviously the main gate leading to the Campus Martius, the *porta Carmentalis*; the ritual known to Plutarch takes place just outside this gate.

Here too we should expect the Senators to gather. During the Republic the Senate often met just outside the *porta Carmentalis*, either in the temple of Apollo or in that of Bellona; we hear of no meeting-place further off than the Theatre of Pompey<sup>10</sup>. Of course these buildings were all known to date from Republican times, and the story of Romulus’ disappearance must envisage some much earlier venue. Plutarch in the Roman Questions seems to identify this venue – viz. “the shrine of Hephaestus outside the city” founded by Romulus himself, perhaps so that he and Titus Tatius and the Senators could meet confidentially (ch. 47, 276 B). This shrine stood in the Circus Flaminius, not far from the *porta Carmentalis*<sup>11</sup>.

The low wet ground known as Goat’s Marsh may have lain on the course of a certain stream, *Petronia amnis*, which flowed into the Tiber on the south side of the Campus Martius (Paul. Fest. p. 39, Fest. pp. 296–297 Lindsay<sup>1</sup>)<sup>12</sup>. For this stream was crossed by magistrates, with a statutory taking of omens, whenever public business was conducted in the Campus.

3. Varro traced the festival Poplifugia to an attack by Latin neighbours which caused the Roman people to flee in sudden confusion (Ling. 6, 18). As in the next two versions, the attackers hope to profit by Rome’s weakness in the period after the Gallic invasion. The ritual that re-enacts the flight, *aliquot huius diei vestigia fugae*, was treated at length in the *Antiquitates rerum divinarum*, doubtless in Book VIII De feriis (fr. 77 Cardauns). Presumably it is the

8 See S. B. Platner and T. Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Oxford 1929) 1, 571 s.vv.

9 Cf. C. Hülsen, *Caprae palus*, RE 3, 2 (1899) 1545; H. Jordan and Hülsen, *Topographie der Stadt Rom im Altertum* 1, 3 (Berlin 1906) 474; Platner and Ashby, *Topogr. Dict.* 98.

10 Cf. T. Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht*<sup>3</sup> (Berlin 1888) 3, 2, 930; O’Brien Moore, *Senatus*, RE Suppl. 6 (1935) 704.

11 For this shrine of Vulcan see Jordan and Hülsen, *Topogr.* 1, 3, 481; Platner and Ashby, *Topogr. Dict.* 584. For the site of the Circus Flaminius as now understood see G. Gatti, *Il Teatro e la Crypta di Balbo in Roma*, *MélRome* 91 (1979) [237–313] 237–240.

12 So Coarelli (1984) 191 n. 12.

same ritual in which Plutarch recognized the “rout” and the “fright and disorder” that followed the disappearance of Romulus; to Plutarch the ritual actions seemed more like a disordered rush than a sally (Rom. 29, 8)<sup>13</sup>.

After the Poplifugia Varro comes to the ritual of the Nonae Caprotinae. “On this day in Latium women sacrifice to Juno Caprotina and carry on beneath a wild fig-tree, *caprificus*; they employ a twig from the *caprificus*. As to why they do so, “The Woman in a Toga” [?], a *praetexta* presented at those games for Apollo, informed the people”<sup>14</sup>. The last sentence appears to say that the legendary origin of the Nonae Caprotinae formed the subject of a *fabula praetexta*, a Roman tragedy; the games for Apollo were held soon after the Nonae Caprotinae. In any case Varro does no more than allude to the legend.

The legend in question cannot be either of the stories – 4 and 5 below – in which the maidservants of Rome perform a patriotic service and are therefore accorded special honours at the Nonae Caprotinae. As we shall see, these stories all make play with the tumultuous ritual outside the *porta Carmentalis*; but in Varro’s eyes this ritual is already accounted for by the separate aition of the Poplifugia<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, Varro attributes the worship of Juno Caprotina to Latium at large, not to Rome alone, so that the legend too must have been set in this wider milieu. It was a story which does not survive; we shall register it as version 7, after all the Roman legends.

On the other hand we shall soon find reason to suppose that Varro associated the Latin attack not only with the tumultuous ritual outside the gate, but also with the sportive conduct of maidservants that forms the Roman celebration of the Nonae Caprotinae. He thus attests the same ritual complex as do other sources.

4. A different version of the Latin attack, in which the Romans sally forth to surprise and defeat the enemy, is told with considerable detail: Plut., Rom. 29, 4–10; Cam. 33, 3–8; Polyaen. 8, 30; Macrob. 1, 11, 36–40; Polem. Silv., Ad non. Iul. “Not many of the historians adopt this version”, says Plutarch, as

13 The actions he points to are “the calling out of names in daylight and the proceeding to Goat’s Marsh as if –”: the text is here corrupt, τὸ πρὸς τὸ ἔλος τὸ τῆς αἰγὸς ὡς ἐπὶ θάλατταν βαδίζειν. For θάλατταν Xylander proposed θυσίαν, but “sacrifice” is the actual, not the seeming, object of the celebrants. Kronenberg’s θαλίαν, which Ziegler puts in the text, is quite unsatisfactory; the mood is not of “merry-making”. Perhaps ὡς ἐν ταραχῇ, “as if in confusion”.

14 *Cur hoc, togata praetexta data eis Apollinaribus ludis docuit populum*. The words *praetexta data ... Apollinaribus ludis docuit populum* surely mean “a play performed at the Apolline games told the people” about the legend. The play then requires a title, and since the women who celebrated the Nonae Caprotinae were conspicuous for their finery, *Togata* or perhaps *Togata*⟨e⟩ seems apt. Cf. Weinstock (1936) 850–851. The demonstrative *eis* may intimate that the games were close in time to the Nonae Caprotinae: “at those Apolline games”. Or perhaps ⟨de⟩ *eis*: “on the subject of these women”, who are described in the previous sentence.

15 In the *Antiquitates* Varro may well have noted rival explanations of the Poplifugia and the Nonae Caprotinae. But since he gave first place to the legend of a Roman repulse during a Latin attack, he cannot be the source of Plutarch or Macrobius when they recount version 4.



against the story of Romulus' disappearance in the Campus Martius (Rom. 29, 11).

The victory over the Latins, like Romulus' disappearance, was thought to be re-enacted in the ritual of early July. "They say", according to Plutarch, "that this happened on what is now the Nones of July, and was then the Nones of Quintilis, and that the festival which is celebrated is a memorial of that event" (Plut., Cam. 33, 7). According to both Macrobius and Polemius Silvius, the victory is commemorated by a festival of maidservants on the Nones of July. According to Plutarch again, the day of the ritual is called both Poplifugia and Nonae Caprotinae (Plut., Rom. 29, 2). Those who go out through the gate and shout "Gaius", etc., re-enact the sally (Cam. 33, 7; Rom. 29, 2. 4); the maidservants who are busy elsewhere re-enact the signal and the fighting (Cam. 33, 8; Rom. 29, 9–10); because the signal was raised from a certain wild fig-tree, *caprificus*, the day is called Nonae Caprotinae (Cam. 33, 8; Rom. 29, 9; Macrobius 1, 11, 40).

The story is told by Plutarch, Polyaeus, Macrobius, and Polemius Silvius without any significant variation. Soon after the Gallic invasion, while Rome was still weak, some Latin neighbours marched out and made camp near Rome; they were commanded by a dictator of Fidenae, Postumius Livius (Plut., Rom. 29, 4; Polyaeus 8, 30; Macrobius 1, 11, 37)<sup>16</sup>. Under pretext of renewing the ancient consanguinity of Latium and Rome, and with a teasing mention of Sabine women, the invaders demanded the surrender of free-born maidens and women. At Rome a saving trick was suggested by a maidservant named Φιλωτίς (Plut., Rom. 29, 7–8; Cam. 33, 5; Polyaeus 8, 30; Macrobius 1, 11, 38; Polem. Silv.), or "as some say" Τουτόλα (Plut., Rom. 29, 7), Τουτούλα (Plut., Cam. 33, 5), Tutela (Macrobius 1, 11, 38). The Romans, while feigning dismay (Macrobius), sent out maidservants, including Philotis, who were comely and adorned with the dress and jewelry of free-born women.

About the sequel in the enemy camp our sources are discreet. Polyaeus says only that the enemy went to rest: ἐπειδὴν οἱ πολέμιοι λαβόντες αὐτὰς ἀναπαύσονται κτλ. Polemius Silvius says that the maidservants called for the attack when the enemy were "asleep and drunk". Macrobius says that the maidservants were "distributed through the camp" and, on the pretence that this was for them a festal day, "plied the men with copious wine" to make them sleep (1, 11, 39). Plutarch leaves their conduct unmentioned, except to say that they removed the men's daggers (Cam. 33, 5), which of course implies intimacy. During the following night Philotis raised a torch from a certain wild fig-tree, screening it either with "curtains and coverlets" or with "her mantle" (Plut., Rom. 29, 7–8; Cam. 33, 5), so that it was visible to the Romans but not to the enemy.

<sup>16</sup> F. Münzer, *Livius* 7, RE 13, 1 (1926) 815–816, is inclined to think that Postumius Livius was a real person, and that *conubium* between Romans and Latins was a real issue at the time; these questions do not matter here.



At this signal the Romans rushed out from the city, “calling to each other repeatedly round the gates” (Plut., Rom. 29, 8, cf. Cam. 33, 6), and assailed the enemy camp and were victorious.

We may assume that the story reflects the ritual topography. On the notional site of the enemy camp the ritual of the *Nonae Caprotinae* afterwards took place, and Rome’s maidservants re-enacted the signal and the fighting. Coming from Fidenae, the invading army will have followed the *via Salaria* along the left bank of the Tiber to a point somewhere on the north side of Rome. Their camp lay “not far from Rome” (Plut., Rom. 29, 5; Cam. 33, 5), near enough for the Romans to see the fire-signal. Apropos of the Gallic invasion (version 6 below) we are told that the wild fig-tree stood right beside the city-wall, but our source for this detail, [Plut.], Par. min., is not looking to the ritual; he uses his imagination to produce a burlesque variant, a maidservant clambering over the wall. The setting of the maidservants’ festival is not precisely Goat’s Marsh, which as we learned before is the destination of those who go out from Rome shouting names like “Gaius”. In comparing the ritual with the events Plutarch does *not* say that this group of shouting citizens joined up with the maidservants. Although the citizens assail the enemy camp, the only re-enactment of the fighting is the mock combat among the maidservants, which makes it seem that they pitched in to help (Plut., Rom. 29, 10; Cam. 33, 8). No doubt the wild fig-tree stood, and the maidservants sported, somewhat further off in the *Campus Martius*<sup>17</sup>.

An inference can be drawn about Varro’s version of the Latin attack, in which the Romans are put to flight. Varro said that the attackers were “the people of Ficulea and Fidenae and other neighbours” (Ling. 6, 18). So he too envisaged a camp at the north; he too had his eye on the maidservants who conducted their ritual hereabouts<sup>18</sup>. Varro however must have thought that the maidservants’ ritual merely re-enacted their surrender in place of free-born women and their reception in the enemy camp, not a signal and an engagement as well. He also distinguished this Roman celebration from the worship of Juno Caprotina which took place throughout Latium.

We should note in passing that the two versions, of flight and sally respec-

17 Macrobius alone describes the maidservants’ departure from the city: after dressing in the finery of free-born women and maidens, “they were handed over to the enemy while their escorts shed tears in pretended grief”, *hostibus cum prosequentium lacrimis ad fidem doloris ingestae sunt*. This might suggest a piece of ritual – a procession from the *porta Carmentalis* with a show of mourning. But Plutarch would have noted such a striking correspondence between the ritual and the event. It is much more likely that the grieving escorts have been imagined for the sake of the story.

18 Outside of Varro the only town expressly mentioned is Fidenae, which supplies the Latin commander, Postumius Livius (Macrob. 1, 11, 37). Ficulea is an unimportant place; why is it named first in Varro, or named at all? As “Little Fig-town” (<*ficus, ficula*), it may well have contributed to the aetiology of the fig-tree boughs and the wild fig-tree which figure in our festival.

tively, are indeed distinct: although a flight might be followed by a sally to make a credible story, the story would not suit the ritual, for it is the shouting citizens bound for Goat's Marsh who are thought to re-enact *either* the flight *or* the sally.

5. The annalist Piso as cited by Macrobius traced the Poplifugia to a moment when "the people were put to flight by Etruscans" (Macrobius 3, 2, 14). Macrobius also supplies a calendar date, either the Nones of July or the day before – his language is ambiguous, and we shall come back to it.

The Etruscans take the place of Latin neighbours, as in the previous versions, or of the Gauls, as in the next version<sup>19</sup>. No doubt they too attacked just after the Gallic invasion, and no doubt they came from the area of Veii, Capena, and Falerii, the part of Etruria with which Rome was embroiled at this period. So events unfolded on the north side of Rome; the story looks to the same ritual as the previous versions.

6. In another version it is the Gauls who are overcome by a Roman sally: Ov., *Ars am.* 2, 257–258; [Plut.], *Par. min.* 30 B, 313 A = "Aristeides" FGrHist 286 F 1. The day is kept by *ancillae*, says Ovid; [Plutarch] speaks of the "festival of maidservants", ἑορτὴ θεραπαινῶν. Ovid also evokes the begging custom which we hear of in Plutarch's account of the ritual.

The story in [Plutarch] runs as follows. The Gallic king Ἀτεπόμαρος demanded Roman women; the maidservants were sent instead, and "the barbarians, exhausted by unceasing intercourse, went to sleep"; the maidservant who suggested the trick, Πητᾶνα by name, shinned up a wild fig-tree next to the city-wall and told the consuls; the Romans sallied out and gained the victory.

Can it be that Ovid refers to Gauls rather than Latins through inadvertence, and that [Plutarch]'s version comes out of his own head?<sup>20</sup> Possibly so; but the coincidence speaks for a common source. In any case we cannot tell whether the authentic-sounding name "Atepomarus" is due to [Plutarch] or to such a source; nor whether the name "Retana" is somehow meaningful. On the other hand the use of the fig-tree for climbing instead of signalling can be safely laid to [Plutarch].

This version, if indeed it was originally told with an eye to the ritual, implies the same setting as the others do for the "maidservants' festival"; for after the battle of the Anio the Gauls advanced on Rome from the north-east.

7. Varro, as we saw above, alludes to a story explaining why women worship Juno Caprotina throughout Latium.

<sup>19</sup> Kraus (1953) 75 thinks that this is the same attack as in the previous versions, on the grounds that the people of Fidenae could be counted as Etruscans. But the previous versions insist upon the Latin kinship of Rome and Fidenae.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Wissowa (1899) 1552; Jacoby on "Aristeides" FGrHist 286 F 1.

### III. *The calendar date*

Before going on to reconstruct the ritual, we should ascertain the date on which it fell. The evidence is contradictory, but as we shall see, the contradiction cannot be resolved by assigning different elements of the ritual to different dates.

The legends which we have just examined speak of commemorative rites falling on a certain day, whether this was the 5th of July (Plut., Num. 2, 1) or the Nones, and whether the rites are called Poplifugia or Nonae Caprotinae or “the festival of maidservants”. It is true that we hear of two groups of celebrants in two distinct settings – the citizens who go out to Goat’s Marsh while shouting names like “Gaius”, and the maidservants who beg and sport, who stage a mock combat, and who are busy round the wild fig-tree. The shouting citizens re-enact either a tumultuous rush after Romulus’ disappearance (version 2), or a panic flight from attacking Latins or Etruscans (versions 3, 5), or a sortie against a camp of Latins or of Gauls (versions 4, 6). The maidservants re-enact the surrender of women like themselves into the hands of a lustful enemy (versions 4, 6, and no doubt also 3, 5), and perhaps an ensuing signal and engagement (versions 4, 6). Versions 4 and 6 combine the sortie re-enacted by the citizens with the signal and engagement re-enacted by the maidservants so as to make a connected story; it follows that both citizens and maidservants re-enact their parts on the same day.

It is instructive to compare Piso’s aetiology as summarized by Macrobius (3, 2, 13–14). The Romans, said Piso, were first put to flight by the Etruscans, whence the festival Poplifugia (version 5); on another day the tide turned, whence another piece of ritual. “Piso says that *vitula* is a word for ‘victory’. As proof thereof he observes that when success came on the day after the Nones of July – for on the day before, the people had been put to flight by the Etruscans, whence the festival Poplifugia – at certain sacrifices made after the victory a joyful shout, *vitulatio*, goes up.” The words *postridie Nonas Iulias re bene gesta, cum pridie populus*, etc., are ambiguous: *pridie* may mean either “the day before” the aforementioned Nones, or “the day before” the aforementioned success, viz. the Nones. In either case those sacrifices accompanied by a joyful shout are a separate rite on another day, and they give rise to a separate legend. By contrast it was not feasible to say that whereas the Poplifugia signalled a defeat, the Nonae Caprotinae signalled a subsequent victory.

As to the ritual nomenclature, the term Poplifugia is commonly used of the shouting citizens, Nonae Caprotinae of the frolicking maidservants; the latter term is then linked with the wild fig-tree, *caprificus*. But when Plutarch describes the shouting citizens and the sacrifice at Goat’s Marsh, he gives both terms, Poplifugia and Nonae Caprotinae, and explains the latter as referring to Goat’s Marsh; “for they call the goat *capra*” (Rom. 29, 2, cf. Cam. 33, 10, Num. 2, 1).

It is generally said that Plutarch has mixed up two festivals falling on different days, the Poplifugia and the Nonae Caprotinae<sup>21</sup>. This would be hard to credit even if Plutarch stood alone. All his life Plutarch studied and expounded commemorative ritual, Roman as well as Greek; he wrote a monograph on commemorative days (Cam. 19, 6 = fr. 142 Sandbach; Lamprias no. 200a). But Plutarch does not stand alone. Version 4, the sally against the Latins, is known from other sources too; versions 5–6 presuppose the same ritual complex of shouting citizens and frolicking maidservants; probably version 3 as well, which we owe to Varro. It is certain then that the Poplifugia and the Nonae Caprotinae took place on the same day. We start from this certainty in addressing the contradictory evidence for the date.

The epigraphic Fasti (Maff., Amit., Ant. min.) register the Poplifugia in large letters under 5th July, a day marked *NP*; there is no word of the Nonae Caprotinae or *ancillarum feriae*. The sacrifice at Goat's Marsh, i.e. the Poplifugia, is assigned by Plutarch to 5th July, πέμπτη δ' ἱσταμένου μηνός – “the day which they now call Nonae Caprotinae” (Num. 2, 1)<sup>22</sup>.

Much more commonly “the Nones of July”, i.e. the 7th, is given as the date of either the ritual or the disappearance of Romulus. All the instances have been cited already. The Poplifugia are dated to the Nones by Plutarch and Macrobius; the Nonae Caprotinae, or else the festival of maidservants, are so dated by Plutarch, Macrobius, and Polemius Silvius; the disappearance of Romulus is so dated by Cicero, Plutarch, Solinus and SHA Comm.

Which is the true date of our ritual? The Fasti are not likely to be wrong; nor yet Plutarch, when he gives us an express numerical date, πέμπτη ἱσταμένου. This day, he further says, is called Nonae Caprotinae. If so, confusion was bound to follow. Anyone who did not actually note and remember 5th July as the day when citizens went shouting to Goat's Marsh, and when maidservants frolicked at the *caprificus* – anyone without this first-hand knowledge must assume that the Nonae Caprotinae are the Nones of July, the 7th (all modern students have assumed as much)<sup>23</sup>.

That the Nonae Caprotinae are the 5th of July, not the 7th, should cause no surprise. The very name “Caprotinae”, whatever its origin, indicates that these Nones were unlike all the others. Of course the Nones in general, like the Calends and the Ides, go back beyond all our sources for the calendar to the period when the Romans marked time by the phases of the moon. The first quarter, when the moon makes a half-circle with a straight edge, is the earliest monthly juncture which everyone can precisely recognize<sup>24</sup>; on the following

21 So e.g. Wissowa (1899) 1552; Otto (1905) 185–187; Wissowa (1912) 116 n. 1; Weinstock (1936) 857–859; Koch (1937) 93–94; Kraus (1953) 75; Latte (1960) 106 n. 3; Burkert (1962) 368; Scullard (1981) 162.

22 Since we expect the month to be named, editors insert e.g. <Κυντιλίου>.

23 A graffito at Pompeii gives a calendar date in 29 A.D., *pridie Nonas Capratinas* (CIG 4, 1555); but there is no telling whether the 4th or the 6th is meant.

24 Cf. A. K. Michels, *The Calendar of the Roman Republic* (Princeton 1967) 13. 131.



day, the Nones, the people gathered to receive notice of monthly business (Var., Ling. 6, 28; Macrobi. 1, 15, 12–13). As long as the months were regulated by observation of the moon, the 5th must have been the usual Nones. It was only when the calendar was aligned with the solar year that July and three other months were unnaturally extended, with the Nones falling on the 7th. The Nonae Caprotinae preserve the original conformation of July.

This reading of the evidence has the immediate advantage of removing the only exception to the rule that Rome's most ancient festivals, those inscribed in large letters in the Fasti, do not fall before the Nones of the month, when forthcoming festivals were in fact announced. The Poplifugia like the Nonae Caprotinae fall on the original Nones, the day of the announcement; we shall see that the ritual takes account of this conjunction.

We are also better placed to understand the passage of Macrobius which cites Piso on the Poplifugia and the *vitulatio* (3, 2, 13–14). While speaking of the ritual shout of joy on “the day after the Nones”, Macrobius also speaks of the Poplifugia as falling on “the day before”, either the day before the Nones, or the day before the shout of joy, viz. the Nones. Some have rather wistfully supposed that “the day before” means *three* days (by inclusive reckoning) before the Nones, viz 5th July, the date attested by the Fasti for the Poplifugia<sup>25</sup>. But where Macrobius says “the Nones”, Piso doubtless meant the Nonae Caprotinae, the original Nones of July, which is indeed the date of the Poplifugia as well.

“The day after the Nones”, as Piso conceived it, was then 6th July. This is just right for Piso's *vitulatio*. In the late Republic the *ludi Apollinares* ran from 6th to 13th July<sup>26</sup>. The 13th had been fixed as the final day in 208 B.C., almost as soon as the games were introduced; we do not know how long they lasted in earlier days; but since the 6th–7th of a given month is the customary date for Apolline festivals in Greece<sup>27</sup>, we may assume that by Piso's time they began on the 6th. According to Macrobius *vitulari* is the same as *παυανίζειν* (3, 2, 11–12). It was the games for Apollo that set the Romans to joyful shouting.

#### IV. The rite in the Comitium

The first version of Romulus' disappearance is deduced from a rite at the shrine of Vulcan in the Comitium, but the legend does not show how this rite was related to the other business of the day, at Goat's Marsh and at the wild fig-tree. Indeed the only express indication of date comes from Plutarch, who tells us, before distinguishing versions 1 and 2, that Romulus disappeared on the Nones of July. This is enough, however. Plutarch was not aware of another

25 According to Kraus (1953) 76, “*pridie* must be understood in the broader sense, as occasionally in the jurists”.

26 Cf. A. Degraffi, *Inscriptiones Italiae* 13, 2: *Fasti anni Numani et Iuliani* (Rome 1963) pp. 477–478.

27 Cf. W. Schmidt, *Geburtstag im Altertum* (Giessen 1908) 89–98.



calendar date for Romulus' disappearance; had any such been current, it would certainly have left its mark in Plutarch and elsewhere in our copious tradition<sup>28</sup>.

It had once been the custom for the peasant citizens of Rome to come into the city on the Nones of each month in order to hear the *rex sacrorum* announce the forthcoming festivals (Var., Ling. 6, 28; Macrobius 1, 15, 12–13; cf. Serv., Aen. 8, 654); Varro pointed to a relic thereof, the *sacra nonalia* conducted on the Arx. As the custom goes back to the days of a lunar calendar, it doubtless antedates the Republic; before the Republic the announcement was made by the king. Servius says that in the days of a lunar calendar – *cum incertae essent kalendae aut idus* – Romulus made it a rule that the Senators and the people should be summoned to the *curia calabra* for the requisite announcement.

But on the original Nones of July, the Nonae Caprotinae, the people for once did *not* gather in the city. Plutarch as we saw remarks that when Romulus' disappearance is set in the shrine of Vulcan in the Comitium, only the Senators, not the people, are at hand. On the Nones of July the people assemble outside the city at Goat's Marsh. If then the king's regular announcements in the centre of Rome are interrupted on the Nones of July, the interruption will largely explain why Romulus was said to have disappeared on this day, whether in the city centre or amid the gathering at Goat's Marsh.

What was done at the shrine of Vulcan in the Comitium? The officiants standing for Romulus and the Senate are presumably the *rex sacrorum* and some representative Senators. Each Senator carries something out of the shrine, perhaps concealing it on his person, as if he had a piece of Romulus' dismembered body. The Senators deposit their respective burdens somewhere else, as if they were burying the pieces.

It has sometimes been suggested that the story of Romulus' dismemberment reflects a sacrifice in which equal portions of a precious victim are distributed among many worshippers, perhaps among the whole community, and perhaps with some pretence of revulsion or alarm<sup>29</sup>. Yet the suggestion does not square with the details which have emerged from our review of the legends. A sacrifice was indeed conducted at Goat's Marsh, but it is preceded, not followed, by a seeming flight of citizens, as the tumultuous crowd advances from the gate to the marsh. There is no hint of a sacrifice at the shrine in the

28 For this reason we may not suppose that whereas the rites at Goat's Marsh and the wild fig-tree fell on 5th July, the Nonae Caprotinae, the rite in the Comitium fell on 7th July, the later Nones.

29 So, with various nuances, Schwegler, *Röm. Gesch.* 1, 535; Otto (1905) 187–189; K. Meuli, *Griechische Opferbräuche*, in: *Phyllobolia* für P. Von der Mühl (Basel 1946) [185–288] 280–281 = *Gesammelte Schriften* (Basel 1975) 2, 1010; Burkert (1962) 365–370. Coarelli (1984) 188–199 gives a different twist by interpreting the dismemberment not as a communal sacrifice but as a purely mythical projection of the complex order of society and government – an allegory which would have delighted Varro.

Comitium; indeed it could not be said of a sacrificial victim that the pieces were taken away and buried<sup>30</sup>.

Some affirmed that Romulus was laid here in a decent grave – “at the Rostra”, or “before” it, or “behind” it<sup>31</sup>. The putative grave was doubtless in the shrine of Vulcan adjoining the Rostra. For several other ancient worthies were said to be buried or commemorated in the shrine. These associations will help us to understand the “heilige Handlung” of the Senators who remove something or other resembling the remains of Romulus. The shrine and its furnishings need to be examined.

The other graves were of the shepherd Faustulus, Romulus’ foster-father (Dion. 1, 87, 2), and of Hostus Hostilius, grandfather of Tullus Hostilius (Dion. 3, 1, 2), both fallen in the fighting with the Sabines; and of a certain *ludius* formerly buried on Janiculum, whose bones were transferred by a Senate decree to “the shrine of Vulcan above the Comitium” (Fest. p. 374 Lindsay<sup>1</sup>). Dionysius’ location for the graves of Faustulus and Hostus Hostilius is not indeed precisely the shrine of Vulcan, but rather “the most conspicuous part of the Forum”, “beside the Rostra”. Since however these two graves, like the site of Romulus’ death, are also said to be marked by the *Niger Lapis* (Fest. p. 184 Lindsay<sup>1</sup>)<sup>32</sup>, beneath which the shrine of Vulcan is thought to lie, and since “the most conspicuous part of the Forum” is also Dionysius’ location for the statue of Horatius Cocles (5, 25, 2), which is known to have stood in the shrine of Vulcan, we see that the death and burial of Faustulus, Hostus Hostilius and Romulus are all linked with the shrine<sup>33</sup>.

The shrine contained monuments referable to the putative graves. According to some authorities “the stone lion” stood above the grave of Faustulus (Dionysius). Some said that Romulus’ grave was marked by two lions of the kind seen on tombs ([Acro] Hor., Ep. 16, 13). Above the grave of the *ludius* stood a column surmounted by a statue of the dead man (Festus). Above the grave of Hostus Hostilius was an inscribed stele “attesting his prowess” (Dionysius).

30 The remnants of a victim used for oath-taking or purification might be buried in the ground, but the mythical counterpart would be a tainted creature. Dirce done to death by Zethus and Amphion is the instrument of the portentous oath sworn by Theban hipparchs: Eur. *Antiope* P. Lit. Lond. 70, 103–110; Plut. *De gen. Socr.* 5, 578b.

31 [Acro] Hor. Ep. 16, 13: *plerique aiunt in rostris Romulum sepultum esse et in memoriam huius rei leones duo ibi fuisse, sicut hodieque in sepulcris videmus, atque inde esse ut pro rostris mortui laudarentur ... nam et Varro pro rostris fuisse sepulcrum Romuli dicit. Porph. ibid.: hoc sic dicitur, quasi Romulus sepultus sit, non ad caelum raptus aut discerptus. nam Varro post rostra fuisse sepultum Romulum dicit.*

32 The passage of Festus is lacunose, but the material restorations are certain: <Fau>stulum nutri<cium> Ursinus; <Hostum Host>ilium avum Tu<lli> Detlefsen.

33 F. Coarelli first identified the shrine of Vulcan with the remains at the *Niger Lapis* (n. 3 above), and I am further indebted to his work for this point and some others about the furnishings of the shrine.

We hear of other furnishings beside the grave markers. After a victory over Cameria Romulus dedicated a bronze *quadriga* and a statue of himself being crowned by Victory (Dion. 2, 54, 2; Plut., Rom. 24, 5), “while inscribing his exploits in Greek letters” (Dionysius). The very shrine was built by Romulus from the spoils of victory, and in it stood a lotus tree as old as the city, still conspicuous in the early Empire, with roots spreading as far as the Forum of Caesar (Plin., Nat. hist. 16, 236, citing Masurius Sabinus)<sup>34</sup>. Or else the worship of Vulcan, and so presumably this shrine, are due to Titus Tatius (Var., Ling. 5, 74; Dion. 2, 50, 3; Aug., Civ. Dei 4, 23, 1)<sup>35</sup>. The best-known monument was a bronze statue of Horatius Cocles set up by the citizens whom he had saved (Dion. 5, 25, 2; Liv. 2, 10, 12; Plut., Pop. 16, 9; Gell. 4, 5, 1–6; De vir. ill. 11, 2). Finally, there was a statue of the god Vulcan (Liv. 34, 45, 6).

Yet the shrine was not such a jumble as this catalogue might suggest; the same monuments have been variously ascribed. Either Romulus or Titus Tatius is the founder; either Faustulus or Romulus lies under the lion, or the two lions; either Hostus Hostilius or Romulus is commemorated by a proud inscription, no doubt a single archaic item, possibly the surviving cippus on which the *rex* is prominently mentioned. More importantly, there are good reasons for supposing that the statues of Horatius Cocles, of the *ludius*, and of Vulcan are all one.

Honorary statues do not go back to the days of Horatius Cocles<sup>36</sup>; an archaic figure of some kind, whether cult object or ex voto, was misinterpreted by later generations. Nor is it easy to believe that the statue of a *ludius*, a dancer or pantomime, stood on a column overlooking the Comitium, marking the place, moreover, where the performer’s bones had been finally interred, after calling forth prodigies, oracles, and a decree of the Senate! This too is a

34 After describing the lotus tree Pliny says, “there was with it a cypress of the same age”, *fuit cum ea cypressus aequalis*, which fell down and was given up in Nero’s reign. In such a perfunctory writer as Pliny the words *cum ea* may only link the two phenomena, without meaning that both trees stood close together in the shrine of Vulcan.

35 Varro, citing the *Annales*, names fifteen deities including Vulcan to whom Tatius set up altars – they all sound Sabine, says Varro. Dionysius contrasts the foundations of Romulus and Titus Tatius: whereas Romulus honours none but Jupiter *stator* at the *porta Mugonia*, Titus Tatius honours nine named deities including “Hephaestus” and still others “whose names are hard to render in Greek”. Thus we learn that the earliest cults derive mainly from the Sabine Tatius, not from the brusque irreligious Romulus. But elsewhere Romulus is said to have founded not only the shrine in the Comitium but also that “outside the city”, i.e. in the Circus Flaminius (Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 47, 276 B); his purpose here, says Plutarch, was perhaps to confer in seclusion with Titus Tatius and the Senate, and Dionysius knows that both Romulus and Titus Tatius conducted meetings in the shrine in the Comitium (2, 50, 2).

36 The earliest such in the Athenian Agora, apart from the Tyrannicides, were set up in the first decade of the fourth century. Pliny counts the statue of Horatius Cocles among the earliest at Rome; still earlier statues, including those of the kings, had been set up not by public decree but by the subjects themselves (*Nat. hist.* 34, 29).

misunderstanding, or more likely a droll fabrication. Now the excavated remains beneath the *Niger Lapis* include a  $\pi$ -shaped altar and, right beside it, the stub of a column which very likely supported a cult statue. The statue of Horatius Cocles is not expressly said to have stood upon a column; but Dionysius puts it “at the most conspicuous part of the Forum”, and according to Gellius, citing the *Annales Maximi* and Verrius Flaccus, it was moved about because of omens, like the *ludius*’ bones – first *in inferiorem locum*, where it brought no luck, then *in locum editum ... atque ita in area Volcani sublimiore loco*.

All three statues are bound up with lightning portents. In 194 B.C., among other prodigies, “Vulcan’s head blazed” (Liv. 34, 45, 6). In Gellius’ story the statue of Horatius Cocles is struck by lightning, and on the mischievous advice of Etruscan *haruspices* is moved from its original place in the Comitium to a lower spot, but afterwards, when a true understanding has been reached, to its perch in the shrine of Vulcan. As for the *ludius*, the man had been struck by lightning in the Circus and buried on Janiculum, until prodigies and oracles led the Senate to re-bury him in the shrine of Vulcan and to set up his statue on a column.

The statue in question must have shown a figure lame in one leg and perhaps with just one eye. By the late 6th century, to judge from that black-figure sherd at the *Niger Lapis*, Vulcan was equated with Hephaestus, the lame smith of Greek epic and Athenian cult; no one then or later could attempt a sculptural rendering of Vulcan without looking to Hephaestus. The statue of Horatius Cocles showed his lameness (Plut., *Pop.* 16, 9)<sup>37</sup>; perhaps it also showed him as one-eyed, the meaning of *cocles* = κύκλωψ (cf. Dion. 5, 23, 2; Plut., *Pop.* 16, 7; *De vir. ill.* 11, 1). The *ludius* was struck by lightning in the Circus, scil. during a performance: he was dancing a role which seemed to be portrayed in the statue. Perhaps the role of Hephaestus ensnaring Ares and

37 After rewarding Horatius with land and provisions, the people also “set up a bronze image in the shrine of Hephaestus, assuaging with honour the lameness which the man suffered from his wound”, τὴν γενομένην ἐκ τοῦ τραύματος χωλότητα τῷ ἀνδρὶ μετὰ τιμῆς παρηγοροῦντες. The statue must have depicted a lame figure, else it would not be singled out as the recompense for lameness. For a different view, see M. Delcourt, *Horatius Cocles et Mucius Scaevola*, *Hommages à W. Deonna* (Coll. Latomus 28, 1957) 169–180. The lame Horatius may well be the subject of Call. *Aet.* fr. 106–107 Pfeiffer: G. De Sanctis, *Callimaco e Orazio Coclite*, *RivFC* n.s. 13 (1935) 289–301; L. Früchtel, *Die Peuketier bei Kallimachos*, *PhilWoch* 61 (1941) 189–190; Pfeiffer, *Call.* vol. 2 p. 114, add. et corr. How far the statue accounts for the story of Horatius at the bridge remains unclear; that its location shifted three times, as Gellius says, is not to be believed, but in any case he does not put it near the Sublician Bridge. According to Dionysius the first battle with Tarquin’s supporters was fought just beyond the Tiber in a certain meadow παρὰ δρυμὸν ἱερὸν ἥρωος Ὀράτου (5, 14, 1: lege Ὀρατίου?). This is suggestive, the more so since the *ludius* is said to have been first buried on Janiculum. But other sources have a different nomenclature for the setting of the battle (Liv. 2, 7, 2; Val. Max. 1, 8, 5; Plut. *Pop.* 9, 2); the battle itself, fought on 27th February (Plut. *Pop.* 9, 8), and marked by sharp cavalry fighting, is an aition of the Equirria.



Aphrodite (cf. Lucian. *De salt.* 63 Macleod); or else of Polyphemus, embroiled with either Odysseus or Galateia.

In sum, the most remarkable object in the shrine of Vulcan was an archaic statue of the god, often misunderstood, but persistently connected with lightning. The shrine itself was persistently regarded as the burial-place of great men of long ago. Apropos of the lightning we should note that a similar portent, a rain of blood, was sometimes recorded in the shrine of Vulcan and in the neighbouring shrine of Concord (Liv. 39, 46, 5, Vulcan, 183 B.C.; 39, 56, 6, Concord, 183 B.C.; 40, 19, 1, both Vulcan and Concord, 181 B.C.). Such are the associations of Vulcan's shrine in the Comitium: lightning (and hence storm and rain) and death.

We come to Vulcan himself, *Volcanus*. As with virtually every Roman deity his original nature is obscure and perplexed, and this is not the place to unroll the controversy<sup>38</sup>. But does our notion of the god agree at all with these realities of lightning and death?

That Vulcan showed himself in fire no one doubts. In poetry his name is often used as a metonymy for the devouring element. Caeculus and Servius Tullius, being sprung from the hearth-fire, are deemed sons of Vulcan; so is the fiery subterranean monster Cacus. Under the Empire, when fire was a present danger to Rome and other crowded cities, Vulcan was propitiated by the authorities. None of this explains why Vulcan in early days had such general importance for the community that he was worshipped next to the Comitium and outside the *porta Carmentalis*. It cannot be solely because of fire's destructive power, out of fear and aversion. Yet most attempts to give him a positive role are unconvincing – whether as a solar deity warming the crops; or as a god of under-earth promoting fertility; or as a god of the funeral pyre; or (paradoxically) as a god of Tiber's waters.

A different approach is suggested by Vulcan's connexion with underground fires, volcanic or gaseous. The steaming sulphurous plain above Puteoli was called ἡ τοῦ Ἡφαίστου ἀγορά, i.e. *Forum Volcani* (Str. 5, 4, 6, p. 246), and at Mutina fires erupted from the ground “on days sacred to Vulcan” (Plin., *Nat. hist.* 2, 240). We should note however that the volcanic activity of the Aeolian Islands was ascribed by the Greeks not to Hephaestus alone, but to the Cyclopes as well, to fire demons dwelling underground who are in fact compounded of Greek and native belief. It was natural for the Greeks to say that these demons toil at forge and anvil in the service of Hephaestus, god of fire

38 Cf. A. v. Domaszewski, *Abhandlungen zur Römischen Religion* (Leipzig 1909) 108–109. 172–173; Wissowa (1912) 229–232; J. Carcopino, *Virgile et les origines d'Ostie* (Paris 1919) 39–167; Domaszewski, *Volcanalia*, ARW 20 (1920) 79–81; Wissowa, *Volcanus*, ML 6 (1924–1937) 356–369; F. Altheim, *Griechische Götter im alten Rom* (Giessen 1930) 172–208; J. Toutain, *Sur un rite curieux et significatif du culte de Vulcain à Rome*, RHR 103 (1931) 136–140; Rose, *The Cult of Volcanus at Rome*, JRS 23 (1933) 46–63; Altheim, *Römische Geschichte* 2<sup>4</sup> (Frankfurt a.M. 1953) 25–26. 443–446; Latte (1960) 129–131; W. Eisenhut, *Volcanus*, RE Suppl. 14 (1974) 948–962; Dumézil (1975) 61–77; Radke (1979) 343–347. 363.



and smithwork; but why should Hephaestus' mates be called Κύκλωπες, one-eyed monsters?<sup>39</sup>

In Greece the Cyclopes have nothing to do with Hephaestus; they are spirits of stormy weather, worshipped by seafarers at the Isthmus of Corinth and by pasturing folk at Trapezus in Arcadia (Paus. 2, 2, 1; 8, 29, 1); when taken up in myth they fashion the lightning for Zeus and are called "Thunder", "Flash", and "Bolt", the three aspects of the lightning (Hes., Theog. 139–146. 501–506; Apld., Bibl. 1 [7] 2, 1, 3; Paus. 8, 29, 1)<sup>40</sup>.

Now on the Aeolian Islands the Cyclopes, though serving Hephaestus, are also spirits of stormy weather. For the pounding hammers and wheezing bellows must be stilled before the Argonauts can sail past in safety (Ap. Rhod. 4, 760–764. 775–778. 818–819); in Virgil the Cyclopes fashion the lightning and all the dread effects of a tremendous storm, and also the *aegis*, an implement of weather magic (Aen. 8, 426–432. 435–438); the "great work" which Callimachus has them fashioning, a water-trough for Poseidon's horses (Dian. 49–50), means the same to a learned reader, inasmuch as Poseidon too brings storm and rushing waters (there are other mythical connexions between Poseidon and the Cyclopes, including the paternity of Polyphemus in Od. 9). Hellenistic poets like Callimachus and Apollonius and perhaps others known to Virgil do not prate idly about matters such as these; they relished all recondite cults and deities and drew on first-hand knowledge<sup>41</sup>. The description of the toiling Cyclopes displays such knowledge. In local belief and in sailors' reports the Aeolian Islands were the abode of one-eyed deities who caused both volcanic fires and stormy weather; so the Greeks likened them to both the Cyclopes and Hephaestus' companions at the forge.

The Cyclopes and Hephaestus were also located by the Greeks in a neighbouring quarter, beneath Mount Aetna (e.g. Verg., Georg. 4, 170–175), so that the same belief existed here. Here too we find that other Cyclops, the universal ogre who encounters "No-man" or *Selbergetan*, together with his pastoral congeners (e.g. Thuc. 6, 2, 1); since Euripides equates the pastoral and the pyrotechnical Cyclopes (Cycl. 297–298. 328. 599), the local fire demons were the reason for placing Polyphemus in Sicily. To be sure, the Cyclopes of Aetna are not expressly linked with the weather. But we hear of a shrine on Aetna which Polyphemus built for Galateia in return for good pasture and good milking (Duris, FGrHist 76 F 58), and the fluctuating tale of the lustful Cyclops and the

39 The novelty was remarked but not explained by Wilamowitz, *Hephaistos*, GöttNachr 1895 [217–245] 240–241 = Kleine Schriften 5, 2 (Berlin 1939) 30–31.

40 On the Cyclopes as weather demons see W. Roscher, *Kyklopen*, ML 2, 1 (1890–1894) 1676–1678; Meuli, *Odysee und Argonautika. Untersuchungen zur griechischen Sagen-geschichte und zum Epos* (Basel 1920) 75–78 = Ges. Schr. 2, 644–646; S. Eitrem, *Kyklopen*, RE 11, 2 (1922) 2332–2333. 2340–2345.

41 For the volcanic phenomena and Hephaestus' smithy the scholia to Apollonius (3, 41–43; 4, 761–765) cite Callias Περί Ἀγαθοκλέα, FGrHist 564 F 4, Pytheas ἐν Περίοδῳ γῆς F 15 Mette, Agathocles ἐν τοῖς Ὑπομνήμασι FGrHist 472 F 8.

wanton Nymph suits a background of weather magic – as we shall see in due course<sup>42</sup>.

The fire god Vulcan is likely to be related to these one-eyed spirits of fire and storm. At some places he has to do with volcanic fire, and at Rome with rain and lightning and a statue which is arguably one-eyed<sup>43</sup>. So we return to that enigmatic rite in the Comitium. The Senators each remove something which seems like a piece of Romulus from a shrine which seems like an ancient burial-place.

The Senators are practicing a rain charm. To disturb the dead, to lay open a grave, is to bring clouds and rain<sup>44</sup>. The charm is very widely documented: at the Huns' graves in Prussia; in Virgil's magic castle, where a chest contains his bones; at the burial ground of Polynesian chiefs; at the grave mound of the giant Antaeus in Mauretania. The last instance is thus described by Pomponius Mela (3, 106): "when some part has been dug out, the rains are wont to fall, and until the excavation has been filled up again, they continue". The belief behind this is that rain comes from the earth, like rivers and springs, and can be summoned by opening the earth and arousing the dead who dwell there. At the shrine of Vulcan there is also the belief that lightning comes from the earth<sup>45</sup>.

The tokens which the Senators removed were deposited elsewhere, perhaps actually buried, as the story says. Until they were returned to the shrine, the rain-bringing magic was in effect. This period may have ended with the festival Volcanalia on 23rd August, when Vulcan received sacrifice both at the Comitium and in the Circus Flaminius, and crowds of people gave an ostentatious welcome to the burning sun (Paul. Nol., Carm. 32, 137–138)<sup>46</sup>. 5th July to 23rd August are the hottest days of summer, "the dog days", the time for rain magic.

42 It is usually held that the story of Polyphemus and Galatea was freely invented by Philoxenus and freely varied by later poets, and that Duris' notice of the shrine is either false or irrelevant: e.g. C. Robert, *Die griechische Heldensage* 3, 2, 1 (Berlin 1926) 1351–1355; H. Dörrie, *Die schöne Galatea* (Munich 1968) 7–57. Duris aside, this view misconceives the purpose and manner of *poetae docti* who transform the curiosities of cult into the refinements of literature.

43 As the chief god of Ostia, Rome's first maritime colony, Vulcan must have advanced the purposes for which the colony was founded, viz. to repel sea-borne attack and to admit sea-borne trade; and what was more important for these purposes than the weather? Even under the Empire it was the aediles of Vulcan who conducted rites of expiation after lightning struck a public place: R. Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford 1973) 338. It may well be that Vulcan's original character was maintained longer at Ostia than at Rome itself. For details of the cult see Meiggs, pp. 177–178. 337–343; Meiggs leaves it an open question why Vulcan had first place.

44 See F. Oertel, *Antaios I*, ML 1, 1 (1884–1886) 364; J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*<sup>3</sup> (London 1911) 1, 284–287; W. Fiedler, *Antiker Wetterzauber* (Stuttgart 1931) 58–59.

45 A scientific theory traced lightning and winds to a dry exhalation of the earth, and clouds, rain and the like to a wet exhalation ([Arist.] *De mundo* 4, 394 a 9–20). It was an Etruscan doctrine that the earth is the source of certain kinds of lightning (Plin. *Nat. hist.* 2, 138–139). Neither has anything to do with Vulcan or rain magic.

46 *omnis credula turba | suspendunt soli per Volcanalia vestes*.

### V. The rite at Goat's Marsh

Whereas the rite at the Comitium can only be deduced from the legend of Romulus' disappearance, the rite at Goat's Marsh is described from the life. A shouting crowd of citizens advance from the gate, scil. the *porta Carmentalis*, to Goat's Marsh, where a sacrifice is made (Plut., Rom. 29, 2–3. 11; Cam. 33, 7). The action mimics fear and disorder, says Plutarch; it is more like a frightened mob than a sortie of soldiers. This is plainly the rite called Poplifugia, “flights of the people”, mentioned apropos of the legends by Varro, Dionysius, Plutarch and Piso, ap. Macrobius. The plural form Poplifugia, which contrasts with the singular form Regifugium (the rite of 23rd February), is doubtless used because many people take to flight, not because they take to flight more than once; the Greek rendering in Dionysius and Plutarch is singular, ὄχλου φυγή.

It is well to quote Plutarch's words. The festival “is called Poplifugia and Nonae Caprotinae because they *go back*, κατιόντας, from the city to sacrifice at Goat's Marsh. ... As they go out, ἐξιόντες, to the sacrifice they loudly vociferate many of the Roman names, such as ‘Marcus’, ‘Lucius’, ‘Gaius’ ... The calling out of names in daylight and the proceeding to Goat's Marsh as if in confusion” (this last phrase is doubtful) evoke Romulus' disappearance rather than the Latin attack, unless indeed both events took place on the same day (Rom. 29, 2–3. 11)<sup>47</sup>. “First”, i.e. before the maidservants conduct their revel, “while they go out, ἐξιόντες, in a body through the gate, they loudly vociferate many of the common Roman names, ‘Gaius’, ‘Marcus’, ‘Lucius’, and the like” (Cam. 33, 7).

Now the legend says that Romulus, the Senate, and the people were gathered for some public business at Goat's Marsh. In Numa, where Plutarch is most particular about the occasion, it is a sacrifice conducted by Romulus, “and there were present both the Senate and most of the people” (2, 1). Then comes the sudden storm (or its variant, the eclipse); the people scatter but the Senators stand fast; afterwards the people come back and search in vain for Romulus.

It has always been supposed that in the actual rite people first gathered at Goat's Marsh and then, during or after the sacrifice, suddenly dispersed: hence the talk of *Fluchtritium* and *Unschuldskomödie*, as already noted. But this cannot be. The only action of the festival in which Plutarch (and his sources) recognized a panic flight is that described above, the noisy crowd advancing from the *porta Carmentalis* to Goat's Marsh. The legends bear him out; versions 2–6 all turn on this same ritual action, whether interpreted as flight or sally. In Plutarch's eyes the noisy crowd are re-enacting the later juncture when the people, still upset, *return* to Goat's Marsh to look for Romulus. This is the

47 “As if in confusion”, ὡς ἐν παραχῇ, is no more than a possible correction of ὡς ἐπὶ θάλατταν, a nonsense phrase (n. 13 above); the uncertainty does not greatly affect the present argument.

only feasible meaning of κατιόντας in the passage quoted from Romulus. No doubt the ground was lower at Goat's Marsh than at the *porta Carmentalis*, but not so much that Plutarch could speak offhandedly of the worshippers "going down", another common meaning of κατιέναι, as if they made a conspicuous descent. Plutarch has already described at length the events at Goat's Marsh, including the people's flight and subsequent return, τῶν πολλῶν εἰς ταὐτὸ πάλιν συνερχομένων (Rom. 27, 6–8); now he points to the imprint which these events have left in ritual; κατιόντας answers to εἰς ταὐτὸ πάλιν συνερχομένων. It follows that the previous assembly and flight are wholly imaginary; they have no ritual counterpart.

The rite then consists in this, that a crowd of citizens go out noisily to Goat's Marsh and join the Senators and the *rex sacrorum* who are already at the scene. Plutarch says that the crowd went to sacrifice (Rom. 29, 2–3); he also says that Romulus, i.e. the *rex sacrorum*, conducted a public sacrifice in the presence of Senate and people (Num. 2, 1). On this showing the sacrifice probably took place after the crowd arrived.

As we saw before, the rites here and at the Comitium interrupt the regular series of monthly announcements by the *rex sacrorum*; the interruption explains why this day was fixed for the death of Romulus, the first king. At the Comitium the notion was assisted by the rain charm which seemed to disclose Romulus' dismembered body. Here Romulus disappears amid a great storm.

It is indeed sometimes said that at Goat's Marsh as at the Comitium Romulus was dismembered by the Senators. In the Comitium version, however, the dismemberment is described with such particularity – each Senator conceals a piece of the body in his robe, carries it out of the shrine, and secretly buries it – that we cannot fail to discern a ritual action. At Goat's Marsh no further details are given, and it is chiefly the storm, bringing darkness and scattering the people, which enables the Senators to dispose of Romulus. The dismemberment is superfluous, and was doubtless added to this version after it had already gained currency in the other.

Plutarch speaks of a "sacrifice" at Goat's Marsh – he uses the normal terms θύειν, θυσία – but neither he nor any other source hints at the deity who might be honoured here. After the Poplifugia Varro mentions the Nonae Caprotinae and women sacrificing, at the *caprificus*, to Juno Caprotina (Ling. 6, 18); the sequence rather implies that Juno is *not* concerned in the Poplifugia. Plutarch, who says nothing of Juno, derives the term Nonae Caprotinae either from *caprae palus* or from the *caprificus* where maidservants hold festival (Rom. 29, 2. 9; Cam. 33, 8. 10), but he sees no connexion between Goat's Marsh and the "goat fig". Nor should we expect Juno as a women's goddess to be worshipped at Goat's Marsh by a concourse who are largely, perhaps exclusively, male. Juno can be ruled out.

In the Fasti Amiterni under 5th July, after the usual entry "Poplifugia" in large letters, we find the words *feriae Iovi* in small letters. Whether this is



meant as a separate entry, or as a label for the Poplifugia, is impossible to say<sup>48</sup>. Even if the latter, it may still be a later interpretation of little value. The legend of the Poplifugia speaks of a great storm, and this is Jupiter's traditional domain<sup>49</sup>.

There was of course a shrine of Vulcan in this area, and like the shrine at the Comitium it was in early days a customary meeting-place of the Senate. It may well have figured in the rite, but cannot be quite the same as Goat's Marsh: a marsh is not the right setting for the god of fire. Moreover, our sources did not suppose that Romulus disappeared at a shrine, whether of Vulcan or another, else they would not speak so consistently of the marsh.

In short, no likely recipient can be suggested for the "sacrifice" at Goat's Marsh. The matter may well have been obscure to both officiants and observers. It is characteristic of Roman worship that the gods count for less than magic actions; even at such leading festivals as the Lupercalia and the Parilia one hardly knows which gods were honoured, and to what extent.

The story of Romulus' disappearance is remarkable for the sudden overwhelming storm, which – as described by Livy, Ovid, Plutarch and others – includes fierce winds, dark clouds, thunder, lightning, and rain. The solar eclipse is undoubtedly a later variant, intended either as a more fitting sign of Romulus' end or as a more fitting cause of darkness and superstitious terror. The legendary storm must originate in ritual: it is the purpose of the rite. Here is the plainest possible indication that the officiants are practicing weather magic.

Goat's Marsh has been chosen as the setting just because it is a marsh, a place conspicuously wet, even in the heat of summer. Rain magic often takes place at a source or a body of water – at spring, well, river, marsh, pond, lake, or seashore<sup>50</sup>. The water is stirred or sprinkled; something is dropped into it or taken out of it. Plutarch's "sacrifice" may well denote a magic action of this kind.

It is conceivable that the name "Goat's Marsh" has ritual significance, for

48 In the *Fast. Praen.* under 23rd December, where the large-letter entry for the Larentalia is followed by *feriae Iovi Accae Larentin[ae]*, the intention is plain (cf. Macrob. 1, 10, 11); but despite Koch (1937) 92. 96, there is no reason to think that the two instances are related. Wissowa (1912) 116 n. 1, following Merkel, adduces the reputed law of 42 B.C., that contemners of Caesar's birthday shall be accursed in the sight of both Jupiter and Caesar (Cass. Dio 47, 18, 5); but here as elsewhere Caesar's birthday is undoubtedly dated to the 12th of the month, not the 5th.

49 The connexion is nearly made in Ovid's account of the Quirinalia: Jupiter accedes to Mars' request for the deification of Romulus, and the storm overtakes Romulus at Goat's Marsh (*Fast.* 2, 483–496).

50 Cf. W. Süss, *Hagno*, RE 7, 2 (1912) 2208; Fiedler, *Ant. Wetterz.* 50–52; Nilsson, *Sur un drame d'Eschyle et la quête dans le culte grec*, *AntClass* 29 (1955) [336–340] 340 = *Opuscula Selecta* 3 (Lund 1960) 290. There are many examples scattered through Frazer's section on rain magic, *Golden Bough*<sup>3</sup> 1, 247–311.

goats can play a part in weather magic<sup>51</sup>. Conceivable, but not very probable. There is a simpler explanation: "Goat's Marsh" is a good name for a place where goats come to drink. In the plain near Mantinea was a spring called Ἀρνή, "Lamb"; there long ago Rhea set down the new-born Poseidon among browsing lambs, to keep him out of Cronus' way (Paus. 8, 8, 1–2 = FGrHist 322 [Arkadia, Anhang] F 4). The ritual behind the story can be recognized as a rain charm on behalf of the pasture<sup>52</sup>, but the spring takes its name directly from the grazing animals, not from the ritual. The same is doubtless true of Goat's Marsh.

The *rex sacrorum* operates with the water of Goat's Marsh so as to bring rain; the Senate and the people stand by. The people have already done their part by advancing in a body from the *porta Carmentalis*, and by shouting out common names. Why did they so conduct themselves?

*Fluchtritual*, purification, appeasement: such is the usual line of interpretation. Perhaps they are appeasing chthonian powers of fertility; or, the solstice having just occurred, they are dismayed by the sun's decline; or they are invoking Rome's collective dead; or they hope to distribute the guilt of sacrifice so widely that it cannot well be punished; or they are simply shouting "good-luck names", *fausta nomina*. A minority view is that the rite has a military purpose, to put the enemy to flight<sup>53</sup>. None of this is supported by the evidence.

Although the legends speak of either a flight or a sally, and although the rite is called "flights of the people", we should give more weight to Plutarch's description of what was actually done. The citizens do not run but walk, βαδίζειν (Rom. 29, 11); they go in a body, ἄνθρωποι (Cam. 33, 7); they shout those names loudly, φθέγγονται μετὰ βοῆς (Rom. 29, 3, cf. Cam. 33, 7). A steady massed movement, a loud repetitious noise.

Before rain, clouds and thunder. Rain magic reproduces the natural event.

51 Cf. Otto (1905) 183–185. 189; O. Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte* (Munich 1906) 2, 822–826; Fiedler, *Ant. Wetterz.* 49–50. 82. According to Otto the goat's role in weather magic explains the name "Goat's Marsh" (p. 189); "the Romans felt in the goat the darkness and power of the subterranean realm" (p. 189 n. 43).

52 In a rival aition Arne is a nymph, formerly called Sinoessa, who nurses Poseidon (Theseus, FGrHist 453 F 1 = Et. Magn. s. Ἀρνή, Tzetz. Lyc. *Alex.* 644, cf. Fest. p. 90 Lindsay<sup>1</sup>: it is evident from the name Sinoessa, otherwise an epithet of Pan at Mantinea and Phigaleia, that Tzetzes has blundered in ascribing the story to Boeotian Arne). In Arcadia the myth of Cronus and Rhea is always linked to springs and rivers: swaddling and presenting the stone, washing and nursing the baby are mythical projections of the ritual act of dipping a stone in water so as to promote rain and other moisture (cf. e.g. Call. *Hy. Jov.* 10–41; Str. 8, 3, 22, p. 348; Paus. 8, 38, 2–3. 5; 8, 40, 1–2).

53 "Lustration", appeasement of chthonian powers: Schwegler, *Röm. Gesch.* 1, 532–533. *Fausta nomina*: Otto (1905) 187. Putting the enemy to flight: Rose (1934) 157–158. "I do not grasp the sense of this conduct": Weinstock (1936) 859. *Fluchtritual*: Koch (1937) 93. Fears for the sun's decline: Basanoff (1943) 128–130. Invocation of the dead: Kraus (1953) 77–78. *Fluchtritual*, diffusing guilt: Burkert (1962) 369.

The officiants move like scudding clouds, and make sounds like thunder<sup>54</sup>. In ancient Greece they wear or carry fleeces; in modern Serbia they sing, “We go through the village, the clouds go in the sky; we go faster, faster go the clouds; they have overtaken us, and wetted the corn and the vine.” At Rome they advance with loud shouts to Goat’s Marsh, where the *rex sacrorum* makes it rain.

## VI. The women’s festival

The women’s festival like the rite at Goat’s Marsh is described from the life, and rather fully. It was celebrated outside the city in a rustic setting: the women sat and dined beneath canopies of fig-boughs, and were busy round a certain wild fig-tree (Plut., Rom. 29, 9–10; Cam. 33, 8; Macrob. 1, 11, 36. 40). It took place later in the day than the rite at Goat’s Marsh (Plut., Cam. 33, 7).

Something similar was done throughout Latium, at least in respect of the business at the wild fig-tree (Var., Ling. 6, 18). Although at Rome the women’s festival was combined with the other rites examined above, it could also be conducted independently. Even at Rome it was the most notable element, to judge from the attention it receives in our sources.

The Roman version has four stages. Only maidservants are engaged in the first two stages, in the last two both maidservants and free-born women<sup>55</sup>.

1. The maidservants, dressed in their finery, go about begging and sporting, teasing any whom they meet with scurrilous banter (Plut., Rom. 29, 10, αἱ δὲ θεραπαινίδες ἀγείρουσι περιιοῦσαι καὶ παίζουσιν; Cam. 33, 7, ἔπειτα κεκοσμημέναι λαμπρῶς αἱ θεραπαινίδες περίασι παίζουσαι διὰ σκωμμάτων εἰς τοὺς ἀπαντῶντας). Here is an opportunity for the lover to win over his lady’s maidservant by giving little presents (Ov., Ars am. 2, 257). 2. The maidservants fight among themselves, dealing blows and flinging stones (Plut., Rom. 29, 10, cf. Cam. 33, 8). 3. The maidservants, and free-born women as well, sit and feast in the shade of fig-tree boughs (Plut., Rom. 29, 9; Cam. 33, 8)<sup>56</sup>. The wine-bibbing of the legend implies the same for the festival (Macrob. 1, 11, 39; Polem. Silv., Ad Non. Iul.). 4. The maidservants and the free-born women are busy at

54 Cf. Frazer, *Golden Bough*<sup>3</sup> 1, 272–275 (examples from modern Greece, Macedonia, Dalmatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Rumania); Fiedler, *Ant. Wetterz.* 48.

55 It is misguided to suppose that the original celebrants were exclusively free-born women (n. 71 below).

56 Plutarch distinguishes the larger group who feast, “the women” in general, from “the maidservants” who beg and fight: ἐστιῶσι δὲ τὰς γυναῖκας ... αἱ δὲ θεραπαινίδες ἀγείρουσι κτλ. (Rom. 29, 9–10). Of the next stage, the rite at the wild fig-tree, Macrobius says that “free-born women and maidservants” both take part: *liberae pariter ancillaeque sacrificant*, etc. (1, 11, 36). In Latium at large Varro speaks of *mulieres* as officiating at the wild fig-tree (Ling. 6, 18). Latte (1960) 106 n. 2 has misunderstood Ausonius’ line *cum stola matronis dempta teget famulas* (*De fer. Rom.* 10), which merely echoes Ovid (*Ars am.* 2, 258); Ausonius does not mean that “on this day the matrons did not wear the *stola*”, but that the maidservants are dressed as finely as matrons, reputedly because the maidservants once borrowed the matrons’ dress as a disguise.

the wild fig-tree. Macrobius calls this a sacrifice to Juno Caprotina, “at which the milk is used that flows from the wild fig-tree” (1, 11, 36. 40). Of Latium at large Varro says that “the women sacrifice to Juno Caprotina and carry on beneath a wild fig-tree; they use a twig, *virga*, from the wild fig-tree” (Ling. 6, 18). Other ritual actions can be safely inferred from the legendary actions of Philotis-Tutula: she raises a torch from the wild fig-tree, and she hangs up sheets as if to screen it, either “curtains and coverlets” or “her mantle” (Rom. 29, 8; Cam. 33, 5)<sup>57</sup>.

Though distinct from the rites at the Comitium and at Goat’s Marsh, the women’s festival was still conducted under civic auspices. “They give the women a feast outside the city”, ἐστῶσι κτλ., says Plutarch (Rom. 29, 9), i.e. the authorities provide the fare. Macrobius says that when the invading Latins had been overcome, the Senate showed its gratitude to the maidservants by taking several steps: it set them free, and supplied a dowry from public funds, and allowed them to wear the finery which had been used in the trick, and instituted the festival (1, 11, 40, *memor beneficii senatus ... iussit ... fecit ... concessit ... nuncupavit ... statuit ...*). Senators had a part in the rites at the Comitium and at Goat’s Marsh, and no doubt they were visibly concerned with the women’s festival as well.

The business at the wild fig-tree is represented by Varro and Macrobius as a sacrifice to Juno Caprotina; the festival name *Nonae Caprotinae* comes from the epithet, says Varro, though Macrobius differs on this point, deriving the festival name from the *caprificus* (as does Plutarch too, at least in *Romulus*); Arnobius brackets Caprotina with several other cult epithets of Juno (Adv. nat. 3, 30). In modern studies this information has always been taken at face value<sup>58</sup>. The *Nonae Caprotinae* or *ancillarum feriae* are duly registered among the festivals of Juno, and the epithet Caprotina with its odour of goats is often interpreted as evidence of Juno’s interest in fertility<sup>59</sup>. But the doctrine is suspect on several grounds.

First, it is now abundantly clear that the women’s festival belongs to a larger program of events on 5th July; since the rites at the Comitium and at

<sup>57</sup> The four stages followed in this order. In *Camillus* Plutarch says that “first” the shouting crowd made for Goat’s Marsh, “then” the maidservants went round and sported. In *Romulus* he says that the maidservants went round and sported, “then” fought among themselves. It was after these exertions that they joined the free-born women to rest and dine in the shade. The business at the wild fig-tree came last of all, as the legend shows.

<sup>58</sup> Among the works cited in n. 1 above there is no dissenting voice. Those who find the epithet Caprotina especially significant are Pestalozza (1933), Weinstock (1936), Lejeune (1967), and Radke (1979): according to Radke the root is not *caper* but a word for the male member.

<sup>59</sup> It has also been held that Juno is connected with figs, and hence with the rites of the *Nonae Caprotinae*, by a dedication at Praeneste, CIL 1, 2<sup>2</sup>, 2439 = *Inscr. Lat. Lib. Reip.* 167: J. Whatmough, *A new epithet of Juno*, CQ s. 1, 16 (1922) 190; Latte (1960) 107. Whatmough, reading *Iuno(ne) palos{t}ca|ria*, pointed to Macrobius 3, 20, 1, *palusca* as a variety of fig. This was at best a slender thread; it is wholly dissipated by Degraffi’s reading, *palostca |---ria*.



Goat's Marsh have nothing to do with Juno, this is not in the main a festival of hers. Second, Plutarch as our fullest source does not mention Juno; Varro, who doubtless stands behind both Macrobius and Arnobius, had a theologizing bent and regularly looked for nameable gods and goddesses, a doubtful approach to early Roman religion. Third, as we also know from Varro, Juno had power over the waxing moon of the first quarter, receiving worship in the *curia calabra* and in the *regia* on the Calends of every month, when the interval before the Nones was fixed (Var., Ling. 6, 27; Macrob. 1, 15, 9–12. 18–20)<sup>60</sup>; if then she was honoured on the Nones of July for her lunar function, it was natural for observers to connect her with our festival. Fourth, the alleged sacrifice at the wild fig-tree does not sound like a sacrifice at all; no animal victim is referred to, but only strange magical actions – for we may so describe not only the actions deducible from the legend, the display of torch and sheets, but also the actions professedly subserving the sacrifice, the use of twig and milk from the tree.

It is then quite conceivable that “sacrifice” is a misnomer for the rite at the wild fig-tree, as it was for the rite at Goat's Marsh, and that Varro imported Juno into the women's festival only because no other deity could be recognized in the proceedings. Of course we cannot be sure; it remains possible that Juno as a women's goddess did indeed contribute to the women's magic at the wild fig-tree. But Juno is far from presiding at the festival.

What is the meaning of the festival name *Nonae Caprotinae*? According to our sources the name comes either from the *caprificus* or from *caprae palus*. It is obvious that neither *caprificus* nor *capra* can produce the form *caprotinus*; yet the former view must be right in substance, if in fact both the festival name and the rite at the wild fig-tree were current throughout Latium, as Varro indicates. The adjective *caprotinus* presupposes a noun *\*caprotus*. Since a compound like *caprificus* is a relatively late formation in Latin (the word happens to be first recorded in Terence, Ad. 577), and since knowledge of the fig-tree, both wild and cultivated, must go back a long way in Italy, we can safely postulate an earlier word for the wild fig-tree. The Greek word ἐπινεός is formed from the root of ἔριφος, “he-goat” (ἔριφος shows the same suffix as ἔλαφος)<sup>61</sup>; *\*caprotus* from *caper* is an equivalent formation in Latin<sup>62</sup>. So the name *Nonae Caprotinae* means “the Nones of the wild fig-tree”. The name no

60 Varro's text is defective, so that we miss the exact sense of the formula addressed to Juno Covella; she is associated either with the Nones or with all the days from the Calends to the Nones.

61 Cf. F. Olck, *Feige*, RE 6, 2 (1909) 2105; H. Jacobsohn, *Zur Stammbildung der Nomina im Lateinischen und Indogermanischen*, in: Χάρπιτες, Friedrich Leo zum sechzigsten Geburtstag dargebracht (Berlin 1911) [407–452] 428; Frisk, *Gr. etym. Wörterb.* s. ἐπινεός, ἔριφος; Chantraine, *Dict. étym. de la langue gr.* s.vv. (both Frisk and Chantraine seem over-cautious). The Messenians said τράγος instead of ἐπινεός (Paus. 4, 20, 2).

62 So Jacobsohn, *Stammbildung* 425–430. Weinstock (1936) 849–850 argues instead for an adjective *\*caprotus* meaning “dressed in goat-skin”; this notion finds no support in the evidence,

less than Varro's notice shows that the magic of the wild fig-tree is the nucleus to which the Romans added other elements to make the civic festival of 5th July.

In considering the significance of the women's festival we should therefore begin with the actions at the wild fig-tree. They are indeed so bizarre as to rivet our attention<sup>63</sup>.

An officiant prefigured by Philotis-Tutula "raised the torch from" the wild fig-tree (Plut., Rom. 29, 8, τὸν πυρσὸν ἀνέσχευεν ἡ Φιλωτὶς ἐκ τινος ἐρινεοῦ, Cam. 33, 8, τὸν ἐρινεὸν ἀφ' οὗ τὴν παιδίσκην τὸν πυρσὸν ἄραι, cf. Polyae. 8, 30, ἀνασχεῖν πυρσόν). She must have climbed the tree in order to raise the torch from its top: in [Plutarch's] variant (version 6 above) "Retana" climbs the tree and gets over the city wall (Par. min. 30 B, 313 A, ἀγρίας ἐπιλαβομένη συκῆς ἀναβαίνει εἰς τὸ τεῖχος). Philotis raised the torch "after screening the tree from behind with curtains and coverlets", or "after spreading her mantle behind it" (Plut., Rom. 29, 8, περισχοῦσα προκαλύμμασι καὶ παραπετάσμασιν ὀπισθεν, Cam. 33, 5, παρατείνασαν ὀπίσω τὸ ἱμάτιον). The mantle vel sim. is said to conceal the torch-light from the enemy reposing nearby; since torch-light could not be thus concealed in the dark of night, there is no doubt that the legend is making shift with a piece of ritual. The wild fig-tree was hung with sheets which are interpreted as Philotis' mantle or as curtains and coverlets fetched from the enemy camp.

In the Latin rite described by Varro the women somehow use a twig or spray of twigs from the wild fig-tree, *e caprifico adhibent virgam*. According to Macrobius the milky juice of the tree is also used, *lac quod ex caprifico manat ... adhibetur*.

A burning torch raised from a wild fig-tree, and sheets hung upon the tree; some use of a twig or twigs from the tree, and of its milky juice. The officiants at the Comitium and at Goat's Marsh were intent on rain magic, and the women's purpose is unmistakably the same; for nothing is commoner in rain magic than a burning torch, or other fire, to simulate the lightning. In the ancient world Salmoneus flings torches at the sky, Ixion lays a pit of burning

relatively copious, for the Nonae Caprotinae, and the word is ill-suited to explain the adjective *caprotinus* as a festival name.

63 Nonetheless these actions have been passed over almost entirely in studies of the festival; if not passed over, they have been wrenched out of context to suit any wilful preconception. Weinstock (1936) 853–856 suggests that the twig from the wild fig-tree was wound into the hair or head-dress of "the priestesses", as a twig from a pomegranate tree is said to have been wound into the hair or head-dress of the *regina sacrorum*; or again that in the fighting among the maidservants blows were dealt with such twigs or switches, as the Athenian *φαρμακός* was beaten with fig-tree boughs, or as the *luperci* laid about with strips of goatskin; and that women's fertility was also enhanced by the milk of the wild fig-tree – to which, we are reminded, Pliny ascribes an aperient effect! Latte (1960) 106 likewise regards the twig as a *Segensrute* used for striking people; in asserting that the maidservants "struck and pelted those they met", he confuses the first and second stages of the festival.

coals, Caligula shoots flaming bolts from a catapult<sup>64</sup>. It is easy to see how sheets, twigs, milk can mimic clouds and rain.

A sequence of actions somewhat similar to ours was recorded by Mannhardt from the village of Mammast near Dorpat (Tartu) in Estonia<sup>65</sup>. Three men climb up the fir-trees of an old sacred grove; one drums with a hammer on a kettle or small cask to simulate the thunder; another knocks two torches together and makes the sparks fly to simulate the lightning; the third, with a bundle of twigs and a pail of water, sprinkles the water all round to simulate the rain. The Roman rite omits the thunder, so far as our information goes, but adds the clouds, sheets hung upon the tree; the twigs and the milky juice are doubtless used like the twigs and the pail of water.

The wild fig-tree like the grove of firs is apt for rain magic. A fig-tree is never struck by lightning, no more than the hide of a seal or a hyena (Plut., *Quaest. conv.* 4, 2, 1, 664 C; 5, 9, 684 C; *Geop.* 11, 2, 7; *Lyd.*, *De ost.* 45; *De mens.* 3, 52; 4, 4; Theophan. *Nonn.*, *Cur. morb.* 260). An ancient fig-tree grew in the Comitium just at the place where lightning once struck (Plin., *Nat. hist.* 15, 77; cf. *Festus* p. 449 Lindsay<sup>1</sup>); though the tree is also linked with the nursing of Romulus and Remus and with the augur Attus Navius (Plin., *loc. cit.*; Cic., *Div.* 1, 33; Dion. 3, 71, 5; *Conon FGrHist* 26 F 1 § 48, 4. 8; Tac., *Ann.* 13, 58; *Festus* p. 168 Lindsay<sup>1</sup>), the bronze fence or *puteal* mentioned by Cicero, Dionysius, *Conon* and *Festus* indicates a place struck by lightning, so that these other claims to sanctity are secondary<sup>66</sup>. If then the powers of rain and storm have a special regard for fig-trees, that particular wild fig-tree in the Campus Martius was well chosen by the women (it was a “big” tree, says Plutarch, *Cam.* 33, 5).

It is true that fig-tree boughs, κλάδοι συκῆς, also figure in the women’s magic, but they have a different significance. We now turn to the rest of the women’s festival, the first three stages as distinguished above.

Everyone sees that the women’s conduct is not only merry but downright lascivious. In the first stage, as described by Plutarch, they go round sporting, jesting, begging: παίζειν implies lewdness, σκώμματα implies scurrility, and ritual begging, ἀγείρειν, is often accompanied by ribald teasing<sup>67</sup>. In a ritual

64 Cf. Fiedler, *Ant. Wetterz.* 7, 11, on Salmoneus and Caligula; Nilsson, *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology* (Berkeley 1932) 135 n. 19, on Salmoneus and Ixion.

65 W. Mannhardt, *Antike Wald- und Feldkulte* (Berlin 1877) 342; whence Frazer, *Golden Bough*<sup>3</sup> 1, 248; Fiedler, *Ant. Wetterz.* 47.55.

66 Cf. Olck, *Feige*, *RE* 6, 2 (1909) 2147–2148. 2150; W. Kroll, *Navius* 1, *RE* 16, 2 (1935) 1934–1935. This tree is called *figus* or συκῆ in most sources, but ἐρινεός in *Conon*; since the former terms are generic as well as specific for the cultivated fig, the specific term ἐρινεός is probably correct.

67 For παιδιαί and σκώμματα see H. Fluck, *Skurrile Riten in griechischen Kulte* (Endingen 1931); such conduct is typical of the worship of Dionysus and Demeter. For ritual begging see A. Dieterich, *Sommertag*, *ARW* 8 (1905) 82–117 = *Kleine Schriften* (Leipzig 1911) 324–352. In the Swallow Song of Rhodes the boys threaten to carry off “the little lady” of the household;

combat, the second stage, the combatants naturally resort to obscene raillery and abuse; indeed the verbal obscenity may well be the reason why such combats are commonly attached to fertility cults<sup>68</sup>. In the third stage, when the women sit and feast and tipple, a mood of lechery is bound to follow; this mood is expressed by the legends of beautiful complaisant women (versions 3–6 above).

Other details point the same way. The women are shaded by fig-tree boughs, which at this season may bear ripe figs; figs are obscene, and fig-trees are emblematic of lust and shamelessness<sup>69</sup>. Φιλωτίς, the maidservant who knows how to entice and deceive the enemy, is named for “love”. The Latin name Τουτόλα or Τουτούλα attested by Plutarch must be somehow equivalent (“Tutela” in Macrobius is easily explained as a later misunderstanding); perhaps Wissowa was right to think of Tutunus (vel sim.), the obscene spirit of the wedding night<sup>70</sup>. The maidservants as a class, dressed in unaccustomed finery, are saucy and alluring; why else have they, as well as free-born women, been recruited for this civic festival?<sup>71</sup>

It is then commonly acknowledged that the women’s conduct and even the festival setting are indecent: the conclusion seems to follow that the festival is concerned with fertility<sup>72</sup>. Lewdness and human sexuality can work on nature at large; they bring abundance to fields and trees and vines, and they increase the herds and flocks. Or perhaps human offspring and child-rearing are in view – though this is not so often of general concern.

the Crow-singers known to Phoenix of Colophon promise that the maiden daughter – after she gives figs to the Crow – will find a rich husband and present the grandparents with a bouncing baby.

68 For ritual combats, with mention of *aischrologia* and fertility, see N. J. Richardson, on *Hy. Cer.* 265–267.

69 When in 154 B.C. a fig-tree sprang up at the altar of Jupiter on the Capitol, Piso knew that all modesty had been lost (Plin. *Nat. hist.* 17, 244; Festus p. 360 Lindsay<sup>1</sup>). In Greece figs are sacred to Dionysus, voluptuous and effeminate, and fig-wood is used for his statues and phallus-poles; an aetiology of such phallus-poles is provided by the myth of Dionysus and Prosymnus, which Nilsson reckoned “the vilest story in the whole of Greek mythology”: *Griechische Feste* (Leipzig 1906) 289.

70 Wissowa (1899) 1552; cf. Otto (1905) 185 n. 34; Weinstock (1936) 853.

71 Some have thought that the festival rightly belonged to free-born women but afterwards, under the late Empire, fell into the hands of slave women: Latte (1960) 106; Bömer (1961) 186–188. There is no evidence at all for this development. Varro’s *mulieres* may include slaves as well as free-born; in any case he refers to the fig-tree rite as practised throughout Latium, not only at Rome. Macrobius does not say that “free-born and slaves sacrificed in the same way” (Latte), but that they sacrificed together. The maidservants are to the fore in all the legends about an enemy attack (versions 3–6) and go back at least as far as Piso (version 5). Our sources are both clear and consistent. Nor should we assume a priori that maidservants have no place in early Roman religion; even the simplest community has use for slave women or hired women (Hes. *Op.* 602–603).

72 The conclusion is drawn in virtually all the studies of the *Nonae Caprotinae* cited in n. 1 above.



Two objections have not been met, or even recognized. First – leaving aside the rites and officiants at the Comitium and at Goat’s Marsh – the maidservants who play so large a role are not a class of women whose fertility is conspicuous or desirable; if they do not typically bear offspring, they are not suited to produce the like effect in nature<sup>73</sup>. Second, we should expect the legends about the origin of the festival to reflect a concern with fertility by speaking of a time (as legends will) when fertility was threatened or impaired, and when at last need was overcome by plenty; instead the legends dwell on lust and enticement.

What other purpose might be served by the women’s conduct? It is rain magic once again. Women often perform such magic, and most often by demonstrative indecency. They go about naked, they rail or banter obscenely; a recurring custom is for naked women to operate with plough or harrow, implements which have a strong sexual connotation<sup>74</sup>. The general pattern cannot be doubted, but let us pause to consider two similar instances from the ancient world.

In the *Argonautica* of Apollonius, which might be described as a gazetteer of ancient maritime weather magic, the Argonauts together with Medea’s Phaeacian handmaids institute a certain ritual on the island of Anaphe, their first landfall after Crete (4, 1719–1730). The ritual is rain magic for the heat of summer. The men pour water on burning logs, and as they do so the women laugh, and the men and women banter each other with scurrilous abuse. Since the women are prefigured by the “handmaids”, δμῳαί, of Medea, it may well be that the ritual of Anaphe employed the same class of women as does our festival at Rome.

In the Athenian festival Αἰώρα, “Swinging”, also known as Ἀλῆτις, “Roaming” the roaming and the swinging, i.e. riding in swings, are magic actions performed by young women so as to allay the summer heat. There is indeed a general misconception about the date and hence the significance of this festival. The ritual swinging is here as elsewhere traced to a legendary hanging, the suicide of the girl Erigone, who being the daughter of Aegisthus was chagrined by Orestes’ acquittal, or being the daughter of Icarius was dismayed by her father’s murder. Since Orestes arrives at Athens, and Icarius welcomes Dionysus, in the context of the festival Anthesteria, it is inferred that Erigone and her swinging also belong to this festival of early spring<sup>75</sup>. Yet the

73 Possibly Latte meant to counter this objection by treating the maidservants as interlopers (n. 71 above), though he does not say so.

74 For women with plough and harrow see Frazer, *Golden Bough*<sup>3</sup> 1, 282–284; for other rain magic performed by women, pp. 247–311 passim; E. Fehrle, *Die kultische Keuschheit im Altertum* (Giessen 1910) 63. Fiedler, *Ant. Wetterz.* 23–24. 38–39, has examples of women behaving indecently to avert storms, but not to bring rain.

75 Cf. R. Pfeiffer, *Kallimachosstudien* (Munich 1922) 102–112; L. Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin 1932) 118–121; H. R. Immerwahr, *Choes and Chytroi*, TAPA 77 (1946) [245–260] 254–259; G. A. Keller, *Eratosthenes und die alexandrinische Sterndichtung* (Zurich 1946)

program of the Anthesteria is full enough without the Aeora, and Erigone did not hang herself just when Orestes came to Athens, or just when Icarius fell victim to drunken shepherds; the stories presuppose a certain interval<sup>76</sup>.

The season of the Aeora is the dog days of summer. Erigone's dog Μαῖρα, "Sparkler", is transformed at the end into the dog-star (and the name Ἡριγόνη, "Early-rising", also describes the dog-star at the time of its heliacal rising in July)<sup>77</sup>. The ritual sought to appease the raging dog-star<sup>78</sup>: sacrifice was offered, and the star was invoked in a traditional song, the Ἀλῆτις, sung by the girls as they went roaming (Poll. 4, 55; Ath. 14, 10, 618 E; Ael., Nat. anim. 7, 28); the song was licentious, for Theodorus of Colophon, who composed a literary version, was seen to be wanton, τρυφῶν, on this account (Lloyd-Jones and Parsons, Suppl. Hell., fr. 753, from Pollux and Athenaeus). The swinging too was licentious, for on a red-figure skyphos a girl in a swing is being vigorously pushed by a satyr<sup>79</sup>; on the other side a girl is being escorted, perhaps to the swinging, by a satyr who wears a ritual crown and helps support an inverted *liknon* upon the girl's head (ARV<sup>2</sup> 1301, 7). Finally, since Erigone is emphatically portrayed as rustic and humble and poor, it may be that the girls of the Aeora were of the same class as the maidservants of our Roman festival.

30–94; F. Solmsen, *Eratosthenes' Erigone: a reconstruction*, TAPA 78 (1947) 252–275; Meuli, *Altrömischer Maskenbrauch*, Mus. Helv. 12 (1955) [206–235] 210–212. 214 = Ges. Schr. 1, 256–258. 260–261; B. C. Dietrich, *A rite of swinging during the Anthesteria*, Hermes 89 (1961) 36–50; R. Merkelbach, *Die Erigone des Eratosthenes*, in *Miscellanea di studi alessandrini in mem. di A. Rostagni* (Turin 1963) 469–526; E. Simon, *Ein Anthesterien-Skyphos des Polygnotos*, AntK 6 (1963) [6–22] 18–19; P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford 1972) 2, 903–905 n. 202; C. Kerényi, *Dionysos* (Princeton 1976) 148–160; J. Hani, *La fête athénienne de l'Aiora et le symbolisme de la balançoire*, REG 91 (1978) 107–122.

- 76 Orestes was put on trial; Icarius' body lay hidden, and he was not immediately missed, and his daughter found him only after long search. Since the third day of the Anthesteria was a sombre placentation of the dead, it was natural to fix the murder of Icarius on this day, as Callimachus does (*Aet.* fr. 178, 3–5 Pfeiffer), and thus to provide a link between the Anthesteria, at which Icarius receives the gift of wine, and the subsequent festival Aeora, at which his daughter roams and swings.
- 77 It is said too that the famous dog-star rites of Ceos were founded as a further consequence of Icarius' misfortune; for his murderers fled to the island and caused it to be afflicted with parching heat (*Hyg. Astr.* 2, 4; cf. *Call. Aet.* fr. 75, 32–37).
- 78 One means of tempering the dog-star is to destroy his common avatar, red pariah dogs – as at Rome in the *augurium canarium*, and at Argos in the festival Κυνοφόντις; when the mob at Ephesus killed a plague demon, his true shape proved to be that of a savage dog (*Philostr. Vit. Apoll.* 4, 10). We are not told what form of sacrifice was used at Athens, but the fluctuating details about Erigone's dog do not suggest that this was the victim. When Icarius' body is thrown into a well, and when the dog leaps into a well – or spring? – called Anhigrus, of which the water was never drunk thereafter (*Hyg. Astr.* 2, 4), we think of such rain magic as was practised at Goat's Marsh.
- 79 Some sources speak not of girls riding in swings, but of masks or puppets made to swing from trees (*Fest.* p. 212 Lindsay<sup>1</sup>; *Lact. Plac. Theb.* 11, 644; *Serv., Prob. Georg.* 2, 389). Different customs may have co-existed in different parts of Attica. Swinging of any kind sets the wind blowing, like the shaking or flapping of various articles: cf. Fiedler, *Ant. Wetterz.* 49–50.

## VII. Conclusion

A few words are needed to sum up our method and results and to suggest their broader implications. To reconstruct the festival we focussed on the legends which tell how the festival began. The legends are absurd in themselves and have been generally neglected; but it is the absurdity that makes them valuable, for it arises from the effort to explain in romantic and memorable terms the prescribed magic actions of the worshippers. The more absurd the legend, the more faithful it will be as a ritual transcript.

Festivals and lesser forms of public ritual met the eye everywhere in Rome as in other ancient towns and cried out for aetiology. Since the Romans had no pantheon and no heroic age, Roman history supplied the setting. The legends of Livy, Dionysius and Plutarch are often as close to ritual as the myths of Greek poetry. Not that such legends are distinctive of Rome: the Greeks were just as ready to embroider even recent history in the light of ritual. At Rome, however, we have a great many legends concentrated on a limited fund of ritual. Much more can be done to elucidate Roman religion from this source.

In the present case the legends of Romulus' end and of enemy attack, when compared with each other and with the avowed commemorative actions, enable us to reconstruct a fairly detailed program. It is not likely to be complete; there will be parts of the program which escape us altogether; but it is the purpose of the legends to account for all the conspicuous public business of the day. The program that emerges is very different from the usual treatments of the Poplifugia and the Nonae Caprotinae, which do no more than juggle a few received ideas about *Fluchtritual* and fertility rites.

The program belongs to 5th July, the original Nones, and brings a striking change from the Nones of every other month. The assemblies and announcements in the city centre are suspended; instead the people and the Senate join the *rex sacrorum* outside the city, at Goat's Marsh; an ancient rite of weather magic is about to take place, the rite of the wild fig-tree which at Rome as elsewhere gives the name Nonae Caprotinae. This rite is conducted by women, but Rome's civic festival gives a part to everyone. At the Comitium the Senators enter the shrine of Vulcan, god of fire and storms, and lay open the under-earth by conjuring the dead. A band of citizens go from the *porta Carmentalis* to Goat's Marsh, moving like serried clouds and shouting like thunder. At the marsh, a source of water in the summer heat, the *rex sacrorum* works a rain charm as Senators and citizens look on. Further off in the Campus Martius the women of Rome, both free-born and slave, resort to several kinds of indecent display, a common means of bringing wind and rain; the wild fig-tree is used for an elaborate piece of imitative magic.

To find the Romans engaged in weather magic should cause no surprise. A few such customs are notorious: red dogs killed to avert red rust or the dog-star; at the Cerialia, foxes running with torches tied behind; pontiffs operating

the *lapis manalis*; spells of Numa, and others of the *haruspices*, to summon or avert lightning. Anyone can interpret the story of Allodius king of Alba Longa, swept away by storm and flood after he dared to mimic the lightning (Dion., Ant. Rom. 1, 71, 3); Caligula improved on traditional magic of this kind by introducing Roman artillery (Cass. Dio 59, 28, 6). Pliny and the agricultural writers have innumerable recipes for private use. But except for copy-book instances weather magic gets fleeting recognition in modern accounts of Roman religion.

Greek religion, with more abundant and varied evidence, can show a wider range of magic rites for bringing winds and clouds and rain; they are quite typically conducted in July, as the time approaches for the dog-star's rising. Relief from dog-star heat is needed not so much for any crops as for grazing animals; in the worst summers the heat will dry up mountain springs and parch the grass and foliage. Our festival of 5th July is therefore bound up with the strong pastoral component of early Roman society, as attested by the festivals Lupercalia and Parilia and the legend of Romulus and Remus. In Greece, where as a general rule agriculture instead of pasturing became the staple livelihood after the Bronze Age, such rites survive most plainly in isolated areas, especially in Arcadia: here as in some other places it is the ancient Mother of the Gods who fosters the pastoral life and presides at a summer festival of weather magic, so that she and her consort Cronus, the projection of this festival, seem to stand for the old ways and for the summer lull when the Olympian deities are away, and with them the farmer's grinding labours. Poets and historians of the Hellenistic period noted and expounded the fundamental similarity between Arcadia and Rome.