

The Family Festivals of Rome

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The Roman family festivals are among the second category of rites which the well-known sentence of Festus describes: *publica sacra, quae publico sumptu pro populo fiunt, quaeque pro montibus, pagis, curis, sacellis: at privata, quae pro singulis hominibus, familiis, gentibus fiunt* (284L²). The *sacra publica* have received considerable scholarly attention in recent years; but for the *sacra privata*, we may still turn to JOACHIM MARQUARDT's 'Das Privatleben der Römer' (1886), which includes chapters that are still useful on birth, marriage, and the funeral¹. In many ways, ATTILIO DE-MARCHI, 'Il culto privato di Roma antica', two volumes published in 1896—1903, is still the basic work on the subject². ERNST SAMTER's 'Familienfeste der Griechen und Römer' (1901) contains much good source material but the author's comparison of ancient customs with those of later times must be read with caution³.

The problem in the study of the public festivals is to interpret the meaning of the rites; the difficulty which the family festivals present is often that of determining what was actually done. We must often wonder how many of the domestic rituals, about which the ancient sources give such random details, were regularly observed, and by what strata of society, at the end of the Republic and in the early Empire. All too often the insufficient data of our sources do not allow us to decide.

¹ JOACHIM MARQUARDT—A. MAU, *Das Privatleben der Römer*, *Handbuch der römischen Altertümer* VII, Leipzig 1886, repr. Darmstadt 1964, pp. 28—61, 124—126, 378—385.

² A. DE-MARCHI, *Il culto privato di Roma antica*, 2 Vols., Milan 1896—1903. Reprinted as one volume during 1975 in the Arno Press 'Ancient Religion and Mythology' series.

³ ERNST SAMTER, *Familienfeste der Griechen und Römer*, Berlin 1901. See also KURT LATTE, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft*, V. 4, Munich 1960, pp. 89—103.

I. *The Lares, the Penates and the Genius*

The center of the ancient family ritual was the hearth; and the primary recipients of domestic worship, the *Lares*, the *Genius* and the *Penates*⁴. On the Kalends, the Nones and the Ides, and on family anniversaries (Cato, Agr. 143.2), the hearth was dressed with flowers, and the sacred fire received offerings of perfume, wine and cakes⁵. It was not only on these days, but on every day that the domestic gods enjoyed the worship of the family. It is a mistake, as P. BOYANCÉ has shown, to conclude from the apparent meaning of the word *Penates* that they were mere guards of the *penus*, taken with the sense 'store or provision of food'. BOYANCÉ interprets the name *Penates* to mean the divine spirits 'inhabiting the innermost recesses' — the very heart — of the home⁶. G. RADKE asserts that *Penates* comes from *penes*, which is derived in turn from the stem **pēt-* (found in *potis* and *potestas*) with the transitional suffix *-n* and the suffix *-es*: *pēnēs* < **pynēs* < **ptnēs* < **pēt-n-ēs*. The *Penates*, in this view, are the gods who have concern for all things in the *potestas* of the masters of the house⁷.

Scholars have generally recognized that the ubiquitous plural form reflects the conception of these gods as an indistinct group; in a similar way, we encounter the plural form *Lares*; though we do see reference to the *Lar familiaris* (Plaut. Aul. prol. 2; Cato, Agr. 2; cf. Cic. Leg. 2.22.55), the *Lares* were most often thought of in pairs (Ovid, Fast. 2.615, *geminos*), and they usually have an attribute expressing in one manner or another

⁴ On the *Lares*, see L. PRELLER—H. JORDAN, Röm. Mythologie, Berlin 1881—1883, 105 ff.; BOEHM, in: RE XII, 1, 1924, 806—833, s. v. *Lares*; SAMTER (above, note 3), pp. 105—123; K. MEULI, Altrömischer Maskenbrauch, Museum Helveticum XII, 1955, 206—235; L. ROSS TAYLOR, The Mother of the Lares, American Journal of Archaeology series 2, XXIX, 1925, pp. 299—313; E. TABELING, Mater Larum. Zum Wesen der Larenreligion, Frankfurter Studien zur Religion und zum Kult der Antike I, Frankfurt 1932; U. PESTALOZZA, Mater Larum e Acca Larentia, Reale Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere, Rendiconti XLVI, 1933, pp. 905—960; GEORGES DUMÉZIL, Archaic Roman Religion, tr. PHILIP KRAPP, Chicago 1970, pp. 341—344; H. WAGENVOORT, Studies in Roman Literature, Culture and Religion, Leiden 1956, pp. 131 ff.; G. RADKE, Acca Larentia und die fratres Arvales. Ein Stück römisch-sabinischer Frühgeschichte, ANRW I 2, edit. H. TEMPORINI, Berlin—New York 1972, pp. 421—441. On the *Penates* see PIERRE BOYANCÉ, Les pénates et l'ancienne religion romaine, Revue des Études Anciennes LIV, 1952, pp. 109—115 (= ID., Études sur la religion romaine, Coll. de l'École Française de Rome XI, Rome 1972, p. 65—72).

⁵ M. P. NILSSON, Roman and Greek Domestic Cult, Opuscula Romana I, 1954, 77—85 (= ID., Opuscula Selecta III, Skrifter utgivna av Svenska institutet i Athen 8°, II—3, Lund 1960, pp. 271—285) gives a good general discussion of the *sacra* of the household; see also DE-MARCHI (above, note 3), pp. 64—69 and JEAN BAYET, Histoire politique et psychologique de la religion romaine, Bibliothèque historique, Paris 1969, p. 63.

⁶ P. BOYANCÉ, Les pénates (above, note 4), p. 112 (= ID., Études sur la religion romaine, p. 69).

⁷ Die Götter Altitaliens, Fontes et Commentationes III, Münster 1965, pp. 247—252.

their concern for a place (e.g., *compitales*, *viales*, *domestici*, *salutares*; or sometimes the owner of the place; e.g. *Hostilii*)⁸.

The attempt to connect the word *Lar* with Etruscan *Lasa*, apparently a generic term for a group of goddesses, is not now in favor; and it is doubtful, at best, that there is any etymological relation between *Lār/Lāres* and (*Acca*) *Lārentia* or *Lārunda*⁹. According to one interpretation, the latter two names are derived from **lārens* '[causing] to be green' from the stem **lār* < **ghlār-* < **ghl̥r-* (cf. Greek Χλωρός [*< *ghl̥r-ǵō*]), while *Lār* (< **Lars*), *Lāres* (see Ovid, *Fast.* 5.141 = *Lār.*, 142 = *Lāres*) is conjecturally derived from the stem **las-*: cf. Greek λιλαίομαι (< *li-lās-iō*) 'to long for', ληναί (< **lās-na*) and Latin *lascivus*. *Lār* (pl. *Lāres*) is thus built upon the stem **lās-*, with the suffix *-is* (to form a *nomen agentis*): *Lār* < **Lars* < **lār-is* < **lās-is*¹⁰. The *Lares*, in this explanation, are not ancestral spirits (cf. *Lāres* and *lārūae*) but good-natured, even 'playful' divinities of a minor order, who inhabit a place and readily bestow blessings upon their worshippers:

"The *Lares* were venerated as the special protectors of the land: it is probably not necessary to search for the kind of *Lar* that was the 'primitive one', as WISSOWA did. In public and private religion, we find a *Lar* or *Lares* . . . on every piece of land which is used continuously, regularly, or significantly by a man, by a group of men, or by society as a whole. Private fields and the *ager Romanus*, roads and crossroads, houses, districts, the city, and also, to judge by the formula of *devotio*, the battlefield in time of war, even the sea as it concerns the seafarer — all have their *Lar* or *Lares*"¹¹.

In their most important festival, the *Lares* were worshiped at the crossroads, where the land of one family adjoined another's. The *Compitalia* were in the strict sense *sacra publica*; yet, like the *Saturnalia* which fell in the same category, they were among the major festivals in domestic worship¹². The feast was *conceptiva* (Varro *L.L.* 6.25), at least until late in the Empire, and was normally celebrated a few days after the *Saturnalia*. Indeed, the festival included the slaves, much as the *Saturnalia* did, because

⁸ RADKE (above, note 7), p. 167.

⁹ BAYET (above, note 5), p. 64—65; RADKE (above, note 4), p. 422, note 17.

¹⁰ RADKE (above, note 7), pp. 170—171.

¹¹ DUMÉZIL (above, note 4), p. 341.

¹² *Festus* 298L² refers to those festivals, which are both public and private, as *popularia sacra*. On the *Compitalia*, see L. DELATTE, *Recherches sur quelques fêtes mobiles du calendrier romain*, *L'Antiquité classique* V, 1936, pp. 111—114. CHARLES GUITTARD, *Recherches sur la nature de Saturne des origines à la réforme de 217 avant J.C.*, *Publications du Centre de recherches d'histoire et de philologie de l'École pratique des Hautes Études* III.7, Paris 1976, pp. 43—71 has an excellent study of Saturn and his cult; see also VITTORIO D'AGOSTINO, *Sugli Antichi Saturnali*, *Rivista di studi classici* XVII, 1969, pp. 180—187.

the *sacra* of the Compitalia honored the *Lar familiaris*, who protected the family as a whole, including the *servi*¹³. The most remarkable feature of the rite was the suspension of woolen dolls — one representing each free man, woman and child — and of woolen balls — one for each slave in the family — from the shrine of the *Lares compitales*, at the crossroads:

Pilae et effigies viriles et muliebres ex lana Compitalibus suspendebantur in compitis, quod hunc diem festum esse deorum inferorum, quos vocant Lares, putarent, quibus tot pilae, quot capita servorum; tot effigies, quot essent liberi, ponebantur, ut vivis parcerent et essent his pilis et simulacris contenti (Paulus ex Fest. 273L²; cf. Paulus ex Fest. 108L² and Macr. Sat. 1.7.35).

All that we know of his worship indicates that the *Lar familiaris* was a beneficent god. In spite of the bizarre interpretation which Festus and Macrobius have put upon the rite, it is difficult to imagine that the *Lares* worshiped at the Compitalia were malevolent gods of the lower world, in contrast to their benevolent domestic counterparts. Moreover, these two groups of *Lares* were united in the custom of the new bride offering a coin to each on the day of marriage (Non. 852 L). The rites of the Compitalia were celebrated where the property lines of various households met; this would, of course, be at the crossroads, and it is surely the sinister atmosphere which belongs to crossroads in general, combined with a frequent tendency to see an eerie meaning in all rites making use of effigies (cf. the Argei and the Saturnalia) that prompted the gloomy aetiology preserved in Festus and Macrobius¹⁴. The *sacra* of the Compitalia included a lustral sacrifice (Prop. 4.1.23—24). In all likelihood, the woolen dolls and balls were meant to represent each member of the family, who hoped thereby to reap the benefits of the purification. DUMÉZIL suggests that this *lustratio*, as was the case with others, once included a form of census-taking for the district.¹⁵ Nothing indicates that the woolen pendants were offered or disposed of in such a way as to represent substitute victims to the *Lares*, who have sometimes been misinterpreted as divinized spirits of the dead.

On Pompeian household altars the *Lares* are depicted as young men with country vesture and carrying the rhyton¹⁶. Two of these figures usually flank the *Genius* of the *paterfamilias*. The name *Genius* in origin could have referred to little else other than the principle or process of generation, as is symbolized by the *lectus genialis*, the marriage bed, which was sacred to him: the *Genius* guaranteed continuity of generation¹⁷. His great feast day was the birthday of the *paterfamilias* himself.

¹³ DUMÉZIL (above, note 4), p. 342.

¹⁴ On the Argei, see LATTE (above, note 3), pp. 412—414, and on the Saturnalia, Macrobius, Sat. 1.7.28.

¹⁵ DUMÉZIL (above, note 4), p. 343.

¹⁶ DE-MARCHI, table 1 (facing p. 48).

¹⁷ See RADKE, *Die Götter Altitaliens*, pp. 138—139, s. v. *Genius*, with bibliography.

II. *The dies lustricus and the sollemnitatis togae purae*

As in nearly every society, both the event of birth and its anniversaries were important festivals in the *sacra privata*. The interval of eight or nine days after birth, until the rites of the *dies lustricus* were completed, was charged with a sense of danger for both the mother and the child, whose vigor was tested by the new experience of life¹⁸. At the time of birth the door was wreathed and a flame was lit upon the altar (Stat. Silv. 4.8.40). Soon after birth the infant was placed upon the ground and lifted up by the father (*suscipere* or *tollere*), an act which signified the father's recognition of the child as his own (Aug. de civ. Dei 4.11, Suet. Nero 6.1)¹⁹. Ovid (Tristia 4.3.46) alludes to this event in his own life with the words *tactaque nascenti corpus haberet humus*. LATTE is probably correct in restating the old explanation of this rite, first prompted by DIETERICH in 'Mutter Erde' (p. 6f.), that the infant's contact with the ground was thought to communicate the power of growth, which resides in the earth, to the child²⁰. Varro apud Servius ad Aeneid 10.76 describes the offering of a *lectisternium* to Pilumnus, which was customarily made in these initial days of a child's life: *Varro Pilumnus et Pitumnus infantium deos esse ait eisque pro puerpera lectum in atrio sterni, dum exploretur an vitalis sit qui natus est*. One of these otherwise unfamiliar gods also occurs in Augustine's description (probably drawn from Varro) of a baffling superstitious ritual (Civ. D. 6.9.2): three men, we are told, represent three guardian deities (Intercidona, Pilumnus and Deverra) who at night go about the house and first strike the thresholds with an axe, then bang upon them with a pestle, and finally sweep them with a broom — the purpose of which was to prevent Silvanus from entering to attack the mother or child. This use at the doorway of implements from the realm of civilized or agricultural life was apparently meant to set up a magic barrier against the approach of threats from the sphere of wild nature, which is symbolically summed up in the figure of Silvanus²¹.

Such rituals as this must have become quite unfamiliar to Romans of the late Republic. The *dies lustricus*, on the other hand, will have remained a common observance. Macrobius (Sat. 1.16.36) preserves the information: *est etiam Nundina Romanorum dea a nono die nascentium nuncupata, qui lustricus dicitur. Est autem dies lustricus, quo infantes lustrantur et nomen accipiunt: sed is maribus nonus, octavus est feminis* (cf. Plut. Q.R. 102, Fest.

¹⁸ For an interesting discussion of the *dies lustricus*, see L. and P. BRIND'AMOUR, *Le dies lustricus, les oiseaux de l'aurore, et l'amphidromie*, Latomus XXXIV, 1975, pp. 17—58.

¹⁹ Cf. also Ter. Heautontim. 626ff., Andria 219; Plaut. Amphitr. 501; Quint. Inst. Or. 4.2.42; Cicero, ad Att. 11.9.3.

²⁰ LATTE (above, note 3), p. 95. — A. DIETERICH, *Mutter Erde. Ein Versuch über Volksreligion*, Leipzig—Berlin ³1925, repr. Darmstadt 1967.

²¹ L. and P. BRIND'AMOUR explain the role of Silvanus in the rites of birth; see above, note 18, pp. 17—22.

107L², Suet. Nero 6.2, Arnobius 3.4). Tertullian (de idol. 16) refers to the *sollemnitates nominalium* (which must be identical to the *dies lustrici*), when sacrifices were made, as we would expect in a rite of lustration. Tertullian does not, unfortunately, specify the recipient of these offerings, though it is not likely to have been Nundina, the obscure goddess whom Macrobius mentions as presiding (perhaps only in a quite vague fashion?) over the day²². The note in Servius auct. (add. DANIEL; cf. schol. Bern.) ad Ecl. 4.62 that *nobilibus pueris editis in atrio domus Junoni lectus, Herculi mensa ponebatur*, must mean that the *lectisternia* once offered to Pilumnus and Picumnus gave way at a later age to similar rites offered to more familiar gods who were also concerned with childbirth or the well-being of the young²³. Tertullian remarks in 'de anima' 39 that the *mensa* was set out in honor of Juno for an entire week. The *dies lustricus* or (as Tertullian calls it) the *nominalia* will have been meant to purify the infant, through the offering of sacrifices, from the pollution which was thought to result from the natural process of birth, and to recognize the child, by the conferral of a name, as a person and as a member of the family. The anniversary of the Natalis was marked by thanksgiving offerings (Ovid, Trist. 3.13.13—15), by sacrifices of cakes and burning of incense (Plin. N.H. 18.84, Martial 10.24) — and, of course, by the conferral of gifts upon the person celebrating the natal day (Mart. *ibid.*).

The time of birth is marked in most societies by a rite of passage; so too is a child's coming of age. Tertullian (de idol. 16) refers to a *sollemnitas togae purae*. We read elsewhere that young men who had come of age put aside the *toga praetexta* and that on the festival of the Liberalia (March 17) they assumed the *toga virilis* or *libera*²⁴, the symbol of manhood. In a well-known couplet, Propertius recalls this event in his own life:

*mox ubi bulla rudi demissa est aurea collo,
matris et ante deos libera sumpta toga . . .*
(4.1.131—132).

Persius recalls how he dedicated the *bullae* (the amulet worn upon the child's neck to provide magic protection) to the Lares:

*cum primum pavido custos mihi purpura cessit
bullaque subcinctis Laribus donata pependit . . .*
(5.30—31).

Tertullian includes the *sollemnitas togae purae* among the family rites which were accompanied by a ritual sacrifice (de idolat. 16). Varro (L.L.

²² Nundina has to do with prophecy, cf. L. TELS-DE JONG, Sur quelques divinités romaines de la naissance et de la prophétie, Delft 1959, p. 68ff.

²³ On Pilumnus and Picumnus, see the article of BLUMENTHAL, RE XX 2, 1950, 1369—1372, s. v. Pilumnus.

²⁴ Seneca, Ep. 4.2; Apul. de mag. 70,73; Cicero ad Att. 5.20.9, 19.1; Ovid, Fast. 3.777; Cicero, Phil. 2.18.44.

6.14) preserves the information that on the Liberalia *per totum oppidum . . . sedent <ut> sacerdotes Liberi anus hedera coronatae cum libis et foculo pro emptore sacrificantes*. And numerous sources²⁵ indicate that it was customary for the father and son to go together in the company of their friends to the Forum and Capitolium on this day, where relatives made an offering to Juventas in the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus for those who had come of age (Dionys. Ant. Rom. 4.15.5).

Perhaps it was little more than folk etymology or a play on words which suggested the appropriateness of assuming the *toga libera*, the vesture of a free man, upon the feast of Liber. In the passage cited from Varro we learn that old women, generously called "priestesses of Liber", sold cakes which they would sacrifice for the purchaser on small braziers set up for the occasion. Many groups of family and friends, each celebrating a young man's coming of age, must have strolled through the city during this spring festival. The sale of the little cakes and the offering, on the portable hearths, had no profoundly religious import. The custom of offering the small *liba* on the festival celebrating a boy's passage to manhood is analogous to the traditional sacrifice of the same little cakes on one's birthday (Mart. 10.24.4). For girls, the rite of passage to womanhood was postponed until the day before marriage, when the bride-to-be would dedicate those objects which symbolized girlhood (*pupas, manias, mollis pilas, reticula, and strophia*) to the household gods (Schol. Cruq. ad Hor. Sat. 1.5.69, Varro in Non. 863.15L) or to Venus (Persius 2.70)²⁶.

III. Marriage

All three forms of marriage known at Rome (*confarreatio, coemptio* and *usus*) were of great antiquity: according to DUMÉZIL, each had its counterpart in Vedic custom²⁷. It is often said that, of the three types, only *confarreatio* was a truly religious form of marriage; yet, all three were under the patronage of Juno Pronuba, and both *coemptio* (a ritual purchase of the wife) and *confarreatio* were prohibited at certain times of the year by religious taboo²⁸. The nature of *usus* (Serv. auct. ad. Georg. 1.31) im-

²⁵ Cicero pro Mur. 33.69; Plut. Brut. 14; Appian B.C. 4.30; Sen. Ep. 4.2.

²⁶ The name *Liber* (**leudhero-* 'belonging to the bud or sprout') does imply concern with the process of birth; and the Romans assumed the *toga virilis* after puberty, at a time when the youth would soon marry and beget children; hence, perhaps, the taking of the *toga virilis* on the festival of Liber. On the Liberalia in general, see A. BRUHL, *Liber Pater. Origines et expansion du culte dionysiaque à Rome et dans le monde romain*, Bibl. des Ecoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome CCLXXV, Paris 1953, pp. 15—16.

²⁷ DUMÉZIL (above, note 4), p. 615.

²⁸ The days which were *non apti taedis* (Ovid, Fast. 6.221) were: the *dies parentales* (February 13—21), the month of March when the Salii danced (Fast. 3.393—396); May 9—15 (the Lemuria and Argei, Fast. 5.487, Plut. Q.R.86); the beginning of June, until the purification

plies no ceremony but only that the man and woman cohabit for a whole year, during which the woman must never be away from her husband for a period of three nights: *itaque lege XII tabularum cautum est, ut si qua nollet eo modo in manum mariti convenire, ea quotannis trinoctio abesset atque eomodo [usum] cuiusque anni interrumperet* (Gaius 1.111; cf. Macr. Sat. 1.3.9). There were, however, religious components in both *coemptio* and *confarreatio*; and in a wider sense (Modestinus, Dig. 23.2.1) all forms of Roman marriage in the Classical age were considered a *divini et humani iuris communicatio*.

The most elaborate form of marriage, which had early become the patrician custom, was that of *confarreatio*; its distinguishing features were the offering of spelt cakes (*farrea liba*) and the participation of two civic priests, the Pontifex Maximus, as the representative of the state religion, and Jupiter's priest, the Flamen Dialis (Serv. auct. ad Georg. 1.31 and Aeneid 4.103). In theory, this form of marriage had in the oldest times been indissoluble (Dionys. Ant. Rom. 2.25), just as was the case in historical times with the marriage *per confarreationem* of the Flamen Dialis and his Flaminica (Gell. 10.15, Plut. Q.R. 50).

The day of marriage began with the taking of auspices (Serv. ad Aen. 1, 346, 4.45; Cic. de Div. 1.16.28, Suet. Claud. 26, Stat. Sil. 1.2.229—230, Juv. 10.336, Tac. Ann. 11.27), and at some point there was a sacrifice (Val. Flac. 8.243, Serv. Aen. 3.136) and an invocation of the protecting divinities of marriage — Juno, according to Servius ad Aen. 4.58, but also Tellus (Serv. auct. ad Aen. 4.166), perhaps Ceres (Serv. ad Aen. 4.58; cf. Paulus ex Fest. 77L²), as well as Pilumnus and Picumnus (Non. 848L). In Q.R. 2, Plutarch names five divinities with a special concern for marriage who might well have been among the gods invoked: Jupiter, Juno, Venus, Diana and Peitho.

It is unlikely that the *sacra* always included an animal sacrifice; and even when they did, there was apparently no fixed place for it in the order of events; yet in all probability such an offering was frequently made as part of the wedding feast. The indispensable sacrifice in the *confarreatio* was, of course, the spelt cake which was offered, surely to Jupiter (Gaius 1.112), by — or at least in the presence of — Jupiter's priest, the Flamen Dialis (Serv. auct. ad Georg. 1.31). Dionysius (Ant. Rom. 2.25) describes the rite as a kind of *κοινωνία*, in which the bride and groom partake of the offering, symbolic of their future sharing together in all of life's fortunes. In conjunction with this act, the nuptial pair (led by the *pronuba*?) joined hands (Claudian, Carm. min. 25.128) — so we can deduce from several ancient reliefs²⁹. By the time of the early Empire the signing of a contract

of the *aedes* of Vesta (Fast. 6.223f.), probably August 24, October 5 and November 8 when the *mundus patet*, Fest. 144L²; the days after the Kalends, Nones and Ides and the anniversaries of certain disastrous events (*dies atri*): Gell. 5.17. See P. NOAILLES, Les Tabous du mariage dans le droit primitif des Romains, Annales sociologiques, C, 2, 1937, p. 6ff.

²⁹ DE-MARCHI, pp. 158—159.

(*tabulae nuptiales*) seems to have become more common than marriage through the old rites of *confarreatio*, which was practiced only rarely (Tac. Ann. 11.30, cf. Apul. de mag. 68, Quintil. 5.11.32), and *coemptio*³⁰:

*signatae tabulae, dictum „feliciter“, ingens
cena sedet, gremio iacuit nova nupta mariti*

(Juv. Sat. 2.119—120).

In whichever rite, the new bride was conducted, after a wedding feast, to her new home, the house of her husband. The bride traditionally wore reddish-yellow shoes and the *flammeum luteum* (Pliny, N.H. 21.46, Lucan 2.361) of the same color:

*cinge tempore floribus
suave olentis amaraci
flammeum cape, laetus huc
huc veni niveo gerens
luteum pede soccum . . .*

(Catull. 61. 6—10)

Her hair, arranged in six locks (*sex crines*, Festus 454L²), had been combed with a bent-back spear (*hasta recurva*, Ovid. Fast. 2.560). The procession, led by flute players (Plaut. Cas. 798, Ter. Adolph. 905), and accompanied by torch bearers (Serv. ad Ecl. 8.29) conducted the bride to her new home, amidst the *sparsio nucum* (Paulus ex Fest. 179L²) and shouting of Fescennine verses (Fest. 76 L²), both intended to promote the fertility of the bride and groom. The Romans themselves probably no longer understood the meaning of the ritual cry 'Talasius!' which they repeated during the festivities (Plut. Q.R. 31; cf. Catull. 61.134, Livy 1.9.12; Mart. 12.42.4; Serv. ad Aen. 1.651). The bride anointed the doorpost of her new house with oil and, as a sign of her domesticity, attached woolen bands (Donat. ad Ter. Hec. 1.2.60; Serv. ad Aen. 4.458; Plut. Q.R. 31), and the escorts lifted her over the threshold (Plut. Q.R. 29). The groom then offered her fire and water, a symbolic conferral of her authority over the house (Paulus ex Fest. 77L²). She was led to the *lectus genialis* where she reclined upon her husband's breast (Hor. Epist. 1.1.87, Paulus ex Fest. 83L²). On the next day, she assumed her role as *materfamilias* and presided for the first time over the household *sacra* (Macr. Sat. 1.15.22).

IV. Funerals and Rites for the Dead

Although varying beliefs concerning life after death were current among the Romans of the late Republic and early Empire, there are several

³⁰ J. CARCOPINO, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, New Haven 1940, pp. 80—84 (= *Id.*, *La vie quotidienne à Rome à l'apogée de l'empire*, Paris 1942, 101—106).

constants in the ritual motifs which accompanied burial³¹. The days of burial and mourning are correctly described as *feriae* (Cic. Leg. 2.22.55) and belong to the *sacra privata*. To celebrate these funeral rites (*iusta facere*) was the first duty of the heir (Paulus ex Fest. 68L² s. v. *everriator*, Varro apud Non. 240.18L). The deceased was called by name (the *conclamatio*)³², a ritual gesture to assure that he was in fact dead; he was bathed (Serv. ad Aen. 6.218), anointed with spices (Persius 3.104), clothed (Martial 9.57.8, Juvenal 3.172), and then laid upon a couch (Lucian, de luctu 11, Persius 3.104, Ovid Met. 9.504) before which were placed flowers (Tertull. de corona 10, Ovid Tristia 3.3.81—84, Pliny N.H. 21.8.11) and the incense burner (Paulus ex Fest. 17L²). Branches of cypress were a sign to all that the household was in bereavement (Serv. Aen. 6.216).

It is clear from our sources that there was a nine-day period of mourning which began with the day of burial, and that this period ended with a funeral banquet. But there is much complexity in the ancient writers' use of the words *denicales* (or *denecales*), *novendiales*, *novendiale sacrificium*, and *silicernium* — all terms which describe the sequence of days and their events³³.

Festus comments (282L²) that the *denecales* are among the *privatae feriae*; and Paulus (61L²) defines these days: *denicales feriae colebantur cum hominis mortui causa familia purgabatur*. That the *feriae denecales* (according to Cicero, Laws 2.22.55 *a nece appellatae*) are not to be identified with the funeral itself is indicated by the phrase of Aulus Gellius (16.4.4): *funus familiare feriaeve denicales*. Cicero (de leg. 2.22.55) says that these days *residentur mortuis* "are kept in honor of the dead" and that they are referred to as festival days among the days of rest which belong to the heavenly gods (*ceterorum caelestium quieti dies feriae nominarentur*). Cicero takes up the subject of these days in the context of his discussion of the whole series of rites pertaining to death, mourning and burial of a family member.

Much weight has been attached to the word *purgabatur* in Paulus ex Fest. 61L², with the result that the *denecales* are interpreted as days upon which rites of purification ("from death") were enacted³⁴. These rituals were the responsibility of the man, *qui iure accepta hereditate iusta facere defuncto debet* (Paulus ex Fest. 68L²). The heir, we read in this same passage of Festus, was called the *everriator*; there was a ritual sweeping of the house: *. . . id nomen ductum a verrendo. Nam exverriae sunt purgatio quaedam domus, ex qua mortuus ad sepulturam ferendus est, quae fit per everriatorem certo*

³¹ For a general account of Roman burial customs, see J. M. C. TOYNBEE, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, London 1971; and for a most useful discussion of the *acerba funera*, see PIERRE BOYANCÉ, *Funus acerbum*, *Revue des Études Anciennes* LIV, 1952, pp. 275—289 (= *Id.*, *Études sur la religion romaine* [above, note 4], pp. 73—89).

³² Serv. Aen. 6.218; Ovid, *Tristia* 3.3.43.

³³ See DE-MARCHI, pp. 180—208; DUMÉZIL (above, note 4), p. 617; BAYET (above, note 5), pp. 71—72; LATTE (above, note 3), pp. 100—103.

³⁴ LATTE (above, note 3), p. 102, note 2.

genere scoparum adhibito, ab extra verrendo dictarum . . . Paulus ex Fest. (3L²), s. v. *aqua et igni*, speaks of a purification by fire and water when those attending the funeral returned: *quod purgationis genus vocabant suffitionem*. Those in attendance were thought to be contaminated by contact with death: the purificatory ritual was so closely tied to the day of the funeral that in Aeneid 6.229–230 the mourners of Misenus were sprinkled with water at the site of the pyre immediately after the remains were gathered and placed in the urn, even before the *novissima verba* were spoken. As the words of Gellius quoted above imply, it is probably a mistake to identify the *feriae denicales* too closely with the day of the *funus* (including the *purgatio* of those who had attended) itself³⁵.

The word *purgare*, however, also occurs in another connection with reference to the day of burial. In Varro Men. 303 we read: *funus exequiati laute ad sepulchrum antiquo more silicernium confecimus, id est περιδειπνον. quo pransi discedentes dicimus alius alii 'vale'*. In Non. (68L) the *silicernium* is described as a *convivium funebre*; and in Festus 377L² (see also Arnobius 7.24) we read that the *silicernium* was a *genus farciminis, quo fletu familia purgabatur*. The term *silicernium*, then, is used both of a funeral banquet which the mourners ate at the site and on the day of burial (cf. Apul. Flor. 19.95), as well as of the food eaten at this dinner. The banquet, coming at the time when their grief will have been most intense, was meant to free the mourners from the painful expression of their misery.

The sources, however, speak of another funeral meal, the *novendialis cena* (Tac. Ann. 6.5) which is also called the *lautum novendiale* (Petr. Sat. 65), and of a *novendiale sacrificium quod mortuo fit nona die qua sepultus est* (Porphy. ad Hor. Ep. 17.48). This meal, of which the deceased was thought to partake, was also eaten at the site of burial (Petr. Sat. 66: *coacti sumus dimidias potiones super ossucula eius effundere*; see also Apul. Met. 9.30–31); and Donatus (ad Ter. Phorm. 40) explicitly refers to the rites of this ninth day as *denicalia*. From both Cicero (In Vat. 12.30–31) and Petronius (Sat. 65) it is clear that the participants were dressed in white, and that the dinner was a convivial occasion. The nine-day period was one of mourning (Cass. Dio 69.10.3; Aug. Quaest. in Hept. 1.172), which came to an end with the sacred meal (*denicalia concluduntur*, Donat., l. c.), and the heir could turn thereafter to the more profane matter of settling the estate (Apul. Met. 9.30–31.).

Cicero (De leg. 2.22) also speaks of the sacrifice of a pig (*nec tamen eorum ante sepulchrum est, quam iusta facta et porcus caesus est, 57*) and of a sow (*quaeque in porca contracta iura sint, 55*). If the former had to do with consecrating the ground for burial, the latter would seem to refer to the *porca praecedanea* which, *piaculi gratia* (Gell. 4.6.7), those who had not correctly enacted purificatory rites during a funeral, as well as those who had failed to inhume a corpse (or part — the *os resectum* — of a cremated

³⁵ Cf. FRANZ CUMONT, *After Life in Roman Paganism*, London–New Haven 1922, p. 53, and ID., *Lux Perpetua*, Paris 1949, pp. 35–41.

corpse) must sacrifice to Ceres (Gell. 4.6.7) or to Tellus and Ceres (Varro apud Non. 240L)³⁶. This rite, however, did not necessarily occur during the *feriae novendiales* (i. e., it is not the *novendiale sacrificium* of which Porphyry speaks); it was necessary only that the rite be accomplished *antequam novam frugem praeciderent* (Paulus ex Fest. 243L²; cf. Gell. 4.6.7.: *ante fruges novas captas immolare*): *in porca contracta* refers to the contracting, rather than to the fulfilling, of the obligation to sacrifice the *porca praecidanea* to Ceres. If the *porcus* of 2.22.57 can be understood in a general sense, it might refer to the *porca praesentanea . . . quae familiae purgandae causa Cereri immolatur, quod pars quaedam eius sacrifici fit in conspectu mortui eius, cuius funus instituitur* (Fest. 296L², s. v. †*Presan*†). Perhaps this sacrifice, offered when the corpse was present, is that which sanctified the burial ground — but the condition of the text allows little hope that the problem of identification can be solved³⁷.

The theme of purifying the family from contamination and from guilt (should they fail in their obligation *iusta facere* toward the dead), recurs throughout the period of nine days. The phrases *feriae denicales* and *feriae novendiales* must have been in large measure synonymous — with the celebration of the *novendialis cena*, the family concluded its mourning and established a new relationship with the deceased member. The festive *cena* was the first instance of the *parentatio*, a rite which would be repeated annually, honoring the deceased person as one of the *divi parentum* or *di parentes*³⁸.

³⁶ There is a very helpful discussion of the *praecidanea* in H. LE BONNIEC, *Le culte de Cérés à Rome, des origines à la fin de la république*, Études et Commentaires XXVII, Paris 1958, pp. 91—107.

³⁷ LE BONNIEC, *op. cit.*, p. 98—99.

³⁸ On the *di parentes* and the *parentatio*, see F. BÖMER, *Ahnenkult und Ahnenglaube im alten Rom*, Archiv für Religionswissenschaft, Beiheft I, Leipzig 1943, p. 1ff.; H. WAGENVOORT, *The parentatio in Honor of Romulus*, in: *Id.*, *Studies in Roman Literature, Culture and Religion*, Leiden 1956, pp. 290—297; P. BOYANCÉ, *La religion de Virgile*, Coll. Mythes et Religions XLVIII, Paris 1963, pp. 146—151.

SONDERDRUCK AUS

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GESCHICHTE UND KULTUR ROMS
IM SPIEGEL DER NEUEREN FORSCHUNG

HERAUSGEGEBEN
VON

HILDEGARD TEMPORINI
UND
WOLFGANG HAASE

II

PRINCIPAT

SECHZEHNTER BAND
(2. TEILBAND)

HERAUSGEGEBEN VON W. HAASE



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