

# Crying Wolf: The Pope and the Lupercalia\*

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Five centuries after Caesar's Lupercalia, in 448 C.E., the erudite Christian antiquarian Polemius Silvius prepared a streamlined calendar for the benefit of the 'less learned', and for the particular attention of his bishop, Eucherius of Lyons.<sup>1</sup> The Lupercalia still features, sandwiched between the 'change of wind' on 14 February and the 'birthday of Faustina, wife of Antonius' on 16 February, but receives none of the brief explanation that Polemius tended to add for those pagan anniversaries which he selected for inclusion — such as for the 'parentatio tumulorum' two days earlier, or the Quirinalia two days later. If we had to assess the festival's late antique standing on the basis of this entry alone, we would be tempted to dismiss it as a vestigial memory.<sup>2</sup> At Rome itself, the sermons of Polemius' contemporary Leo I certainly offer no suggestion that the city's calendar operated otherwise than to a thoroughly Christian rhythm.<sup>3</sup> From his pulpit Leo denounced not pagans but the viciously deviant Manichees or his own half-hearted faithful: if his people preferred circus shows to church services on the anniversary of Rome's deliverance from the Goths, their crime was insufficient commitment to their faith rather than implicit apostasy.<sup>4</sup> The only 'pagan' practice he ever specifically denounces, tellingly, is a gesture made by Christians on their way to worship at Saint Peter's basilica on the Vatican.<sup>5</sup>

Not the least significance of the text to be discussed in this paper is to suggest how misleading such perspectives as those provided by Polemius and Leo might perhaps be. For we should hardly expect, from the vigorously confident Roman Christianity expressed in Leo's sermons and mirrored in the churches of the mid-fifth century, to find the Bishop of Rome mired in controversy with a powerful local constituency over the holding of the Lupercalia.<sup>6</sup> Yet from the very end of the fifth century comes a text which enables us, as with Caesar half a millennium before, to explore the experience of the Lupercalia as it happened, 'to see the festival interacting with the social, political realities of a particular community in their festival spirit'.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the Calendar of Polemius Silvius and its sources, see A. Degrassi (ed.), *Inscriptiones Italiae* 13.3: *Fasti et Elogia* (1963). M. Maas, *John Lydus and the Roman Past: Antiquarianism and Politics in the Age of Justinian* (1992), 62–3, and M. R. Salzman, *On Roman Time: The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (1990), 242–5, discuss Polemius' working methods.

<sup>2</sup> The only directly comparable entry is the Quinquatria (19 March): Salzman, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 161–3, suggests tentatively that this remained a school holiday into the fifth century.

<sup>3</sup> R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (1990), 125–30; C. Lepelley, 'Saint Léon le Grand et la cité romaine', *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 35 (1961), 130–50.

<sup>4</sup> Leo, *serm.* 84.1.

<sup>5</sup> Leo, *serm.* 27.4: 'superatis gradibus quibus ad suggestum areae superioris ascenditur, converso corpore ad nascentem se solem reflectant, et curvatis cervicibus, in honorem se splendidi orbis inclinent'. This is done, says Leo, 'partim paganitatis spiritu'.

<sup>6</sup> R. Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals: Topography and Politics* (1983), 107, presents fifth-century churches in Rome as 'representative of a papacy sure of itself and penetrated by the old educated classes, Christian by now yet conscious of the obligation to carry on the traditions of the classical past'. C. Pietri, *Roma Christiana: Recherches sur l'Église de Rome, son organisation, sa politique, son idéologie de Miltiade à Sixte III (311–440)* (1976) ends at Leo's accession, with Rome fully transformed 'en capitale chrétienne' (1653–1654).

<sup>7</sup> North, above, p. 145 at n. 4.

The text derives from the large papal dossier, the Avellan Collection, where it is given the grandiose title *Against Andromachus and the Other Romans who Hold that the Lupercalia should be Celebrated According to the Ancient Custom*.<sup>8</sup> The manuscript attribution to Gelasius, bishop of the city 492–496 C.E., has been questioned, but not decisively challenged.<sup>9</sup> And the pope's argument deserves our close attention, for it is more complicated than has generally been recognized. Indeed, he begins embroiled in what seems a different quarrel altogether. He gesticulates towards 'certain people', who 'sit in their own houses, not knowing either what they are saying or about what they are laying down the law, striving to sit in judgement about others, when they do not pass judgement on themselves, and when they wish to accuse before they know, and to teach before they learn ...' (*Adv. Andr.* 1).<sup>10</sup> This opinionated error then transpires to relate to a question of ecclesiastical discipline, the proper punishment for a clergyman guilty of adultery: the pope has been accused of being 'sluggish' in repressing the faults of his church. The scandal of the Lupercalia is unmasked by way of counter-attack. These carping stay-at-homes have failed to realize that spiritual adultery has been committed in their midst, and that there has been a defection to unclean spirits (2): for what *else* is a man doing 'who, although he wishes to be seen as a Christian and professes and claims to be so, still openly and officially (*palam publiceque*) proclaims that "Diseases occur because demons are not honoured, and sacrifice is not made to the god Februarius" (3)? The pope dwells for several pages on the seriousness of this lapse (4–5), pronouncing that it disqualified the offender from either launching a prosecution himself (6–8) or from receiving Christian eucharist (9). He then turns to the actual blasphemies that have been committed, and explains that these were not only wicked but mistaken (10). 'Livy the orator' and his 'Roman histories' are summoned to testify to the pestilence which had 'very frequently' occurred at Rome, with countless thousands of fatalities: 'So at that time', he asks, 'was sacrifice not being made to your god Februarius, or did it do no good whatsoever? At that time was the Lupercalia not being celebrated?' But this, he immediately declares, was a trick question. Of course the Lupercalia had been celebrated at this earlier time, since it had reportedly been introduced to Italy by Evander, before Rome itself existed (11).<sup>11</sup> And Gelasius has a second Livian barrel loaded, which he immediately discharges. 'In his second decade' Livy in any case makes clear that the rite was instituted not for the prevention of disease, but to remedy sterility among women (12).

The scandal of the Lupercalia dominates the remainder of the text, through to the very final sentence. And antiquarian pedantry continues to preoccupy the pope as he moves to his most striking objection to the current supporters of the rite, their failure to conduct it properly. Whereas their ancestors used to run naked themselves in the streets of Rome, and

<sup>8</sup> *Coll. Avell.* 100: O. Günther (ed.), *Epistulae imperatorum pontificum aliorum inde ab a. CCCLXVII usque ad a. DLIII datae Avellana quae dicitur collectio*, CSEL 35 (1898), 453–64; otherwise Gelasius, *Tractatus* 6: A. Thiel (ed.), *Epistolae Romanorum pontificum genuinae* (1868) 1: 598–607. For the eleventh-century ms Vatic. Lat. 3787, see Günther, CSEL 35, iv–xvii. Whoever composed the title was sufficiently well-informed about the context to identify Andromachus, but missed the central argument of the text, that contemporary celebrations were not 'secundum pristinum morem'.

<sup>9</sup> P. Nautin, 'Félix III', *DHGE* 16 (1967), 894–5; developed by Y. M. Duval, 'Des Lupercales de Constantinople aux Lupercales de Rome', *Revue des études latines* 55 (1977), 222–70, at 246–50. Nautin's two principal points are at best inconclusive: the situation at Rome cannot be related to the grain shortage of 490 C.E. attested in *Exc. Vales.* 50, which refers only to besieged Ravenna; and although some earlier letters in *Coll. Avell.* attributed to Gelasius belong to the papacy of Felix, the immediately preceding item, *Coll. Avell.* 99, consists of a long resumé of the Acacian controversy with an explanatory appendix (*Coll. Avell.* 99.31–2) which cites a letter from Felix but is manifestly not by him. Cf. C. Pietri, 'Aristocratie et société cléricale dans l'Italie chrétienne au temps d'Odoacre et de Théodoric', *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome, Antiquité* 93 (1981), 417–67, at 421 n. 13; and for the possible provenance of *Coll. Avell.* 99–100, see below, n. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Text references are to G. Pomarès, *Gélase Ier: Lettre contre les Lupercales et dix-huit messes du Sacramentaire leonine*, Sources Chrétiennes 65 (1959), who follows Günther with minor emendations.

<sup>11</sup> For Evander and the Lupercalia, see Livy 1.5.1.

matrons used to offer themselves for flagellation, they have instead outsourced the actual conduct of the rite ‘to vile and vulgar characters, to the worthless and the lowest’: ‘ad viles trivialesque personas, abiectos et infimos’ (16). This charge has provided the framework for all modern discussion of the controversy. There has been a range of more or less anthropologically-informed interpretations of the late antique Lupercalia; in the past forty years, some have seen a populist transformation of cult into carnival, others the development of a syncretistic ritual of public confession and penance, others a resurgence among the masses of archaic religious sentiment, and others again the secularization of a religious festival into a ‘harmless civic indulgence’.<sup>12</sup> The central contention in this paper will be that these interpretations have failed to do justice to the complexities of the situation implied by the text. I shall duly propose a more limited interpretation of the transformation derided by the pope, and relate this to what is known of the late fifth-century Roman context. But first it is necessary to examine the trajectory of his argument. Gelasius’ text is our only source for this dispute:<sup>13</sup> we must therefore take full account of the complications involved in his argument, and consider how these might bear upon the controversy between the pope and his opponents, and on the event itself.

*Adversum Andromachum* is generally described as an ‘open letter’.<sup>14</sup> However, it is a peculiar example of the genre. Whereas usually ‘it is made explicit that the intended audience is larger than simply the ostensible addressee’, Gelasius makes no concessions whatever to epistolary convention.<sup>15</sup> The complicated argument into which he plunges us is addressed to no particular recipient; instead, he only gradually narrows his initial survey of his housebound critics into a case against a separate, single antagonist. These idlers must be made to realize (‘consequenter agnoscant’) that there is a far greater form of adultery than the physical, which must be punished properly ‘in any Christian at all’, ‘in quolibet Christiano’ (2); how can a self-professed Christian (‘cum se christianum videri velit et profiteatur et dicat’), who nevertheless does not recoil in horror (‘non horreat, non refugiat, non pavescat’) from attributing diseases to a failure to worship demons, escape the taint? (3). Only after several more paragraphs does this ‘anyone’ turn into a ‘you’, singular: ‘Do you see the mote (*festucam vides*) in your brother’s eye, and not see the beam in yours?’ (6); ‘But perhaps you may say (*dicas forsitan*) that you are a layman’ (7); ‘and so you too (*etiam tu*) are to be kept away from the sacred body’ (9). Here Gelasius identifies — and solemnly excommunicates — one specific villain, the author of a public and official proclamation and so, we can confidently infer, a magistrate holding public office. Although no names are mentioned in the text, the rubric provided in the Avellan Collection — *Against Andromachus and the Other Romans* — invites an identification with the Andromachus who features prominently in the Italian politics of this period, being attested as Odoacer’s *Magister Officiorum* and *consiliarius* in 489 C.E. and as his envoy to Constantinople, where he also acted as a papal agent in the Acacian controversy.<sup>16</sup> Gelasius

<sup>12</sup> Respectively Pomarès, op. cit. (n. 10), 33–4; A. W. J. Holleman, *Pope Gelasius I and the Lupercalia* (1974), 38–53, 117–18; Duval, op. cit. (n. 9), 259; Markus, op. cit. (n. 3), 132.

<sup>13</sup> The prefaces from the Leonine sacramentary adduced by Pomarès and Holleman are not germane. Even if the attribution to Gelasius is accepted, the contents are general. The wife-stealing malefactors of XVIII–XX, ‘qui penetrant domus et captivas ducunt mulierculas oneratas peccatis’ (Pomarès, op. cit. (n. 10), 222; cf. Holleman, op. cit. (n. 12), 81–4, 88–107), are seducers, not Luperci.

<sup>14</sup> Pomarès, op. cit. (n. 10), 34–6; Markus, op. cit. (n. 3), 131. Thiel, op. cit. (n. 8), classified it instead among Gelasius’ *Tractatus*, followed by W. Ullmann, *Gelasius I (492–496): Das Papsttum an der Wende der Spätantike zum Mittelalter* (1981), 252–4.

<sup>15</sup> A. Fear, ‘St Patrick and the art of allusion’, in R. Morello and A. D. Morrison (eds), *Ancient Letters: Classical and Late Antique Epistolography* (2007), 325–73, at 326: an exemplary analysis of an analogous text.

<sup>16</sup> The index to *Vatic. Lat.* 3787 expands slightly: ‘adversus Andromachum senatorem’ (Günther, *CSEL* 35, ix). For full references, see *PLRE* 2, Andromachus 2.

was therefore taking on a man of substance who was also a good Christian, closely linked to the papal establishment — whom he himself had acknowledged in 492 C.E. as a ‘son’.<sup>17</sup>

But although this Andromachus still engrosses the pope’s interest when the Lupercalia is introduced — the god Februarius is ‘yours’ (‘tuo’), and a single victim is cornered by the chronological trap (12: ‘nec dicturus es’) — at precisely this moment Gelasius abruptly faces about, and begins addressing a wider audience: ‘What are you to say (*dicturi estis*) about the plague, about the barrenness, about the continual storm of wars?’ (13). The sequel shows that the shift between persons marks a genuine change of target, from Andromachus to a wider group, who are described more fully shortly afterwards: they defend the Lupercalia (16), and are the *patroni* of the Lupercalia (19); they are also the descendants of *nobiles* (16, 25b). And they remain the pope’s sparring-partners right through the central portion of the text (13–26). Only in the last chapters (27–32) does the singular reappear, as Gelasius apparently engages individual members of this pack.<sup>18</sup> We must therefore ask why the pope chooses to divide his fire between these two targets, and what the possible relationship between them might have been.

We might begin by comparing the different sentences which the pope deals out. Although Andromachus is solemnly excommunicated as the author of the blasphemous proclamation — ‘and so you too are to be kept away from the sacred body’ — the force of the penalty is blunted by a conditional: Andromachus was being treated with a severity proportional to his own insistence that other wrongdoers be punished (9). Moreover, the condemnation is delivered in passing at an early stage in the text, and is never alluded to again. The bulk of Gelasius’ indignation is reserved instead for the *patroni*. However, these emerge from his thunderings entirely unscathed. When he concludes his text with his prescriptions against future Lupercalia-related crimes, he seems at first to impose comprehensive sanctions: ‘Let no Christian celebrate (*celebret*) this thing, and let only the pagans, whose rite it is, carry it out (*exsequantur*)’ (30). This sounds impressive enough, until we recall that Gelasius’ previous taunts that the *patroni* of the Lupercalia did not in fact ‘celebrate’ it or ‘carry it out’ themselves had used exactly these two words (17: ‘*ipsi celebret*’; ‘*per se exsequi . . . erubescit*’); he had rubbed in the point several times with the same key term ‘celebrare’ (16, 24b, 25b; cf. 26: ‘*exsequi*’). This exclusion of his interlocutors from the terms of his ban can hardly have been carelessness, for the papal chancellery had become a professional organization, its anathemas drafted with legal precision.<sup>19</sup> Despite all its considerable sound and fury the assault on the *patroni*, to which Gelasius devoted most of his text and most of his virtuosity, seems ultimately to signify nothing. We must therefore explain why Gelasius decided to aim wide of his target.

We must also distinguish between the arguments made in defence of the Lupercalia by Andromachus on the one hand and by the broader group of *patroni* on the other, insofar

<sup>17</sup> Gelasius, *Ep.* 10.7 (Thiel) = *Coll. Ver.* 7.7, in E. Schwartz, *Publizistische Sammlungen zum acacianischen Schisma*, Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Abteilung n.f. 10 (1934). In here invoking Andromachus’ testimony for the benefit of a senatorial emissary at Constantinople in 492 C.E., Gelasius takes credit for a mandate (‘*qui et a nobis abundanter instructus est*’) which must have been formally conferred by his predecessor. The equivocation is explained by Gelasius’ diplomatic exigencies: the best exposition remains Schwartz, 220–5 (cf. 265–6, for the suggestion that *Coll. Avell.* 99–100 both derive from the archives of Andromachus himself).

<sup>18</sup> Note how these singulars blend into plurals: ‘You say (*inquis*) that as the image of the thing itself it should not be changed; . . . why is the image more potent among you (*apud vos*), and not the reality itself?’ (27: cf. ‘*sicut dicitis*’, ‘*quid quaeritis*’); ‘Why do you accuse me (*quid me incusas*)?’; ‘let them see for themselves (*ipsi videant*), who fail to obey just admonitions’ (30); ‘if you judge (*si aestimas*) that an objection can be made from the character of my predecessors, each of us is to give an account of his administration, just as you see (*sicut pervidetis*) happening also in public offices’ (32: cf. ‘*vos ipsos abstinere . . . perpenditis*’). There is only one consistent singular (29): ‘you say also (*dicis etiam*) that this has been done in Christian times’ (cf. ‘*quaere . . . unde agis*’; ‘*causandum tibi . . . est*’).

<sup>19</sup> For the workings of ‘La chancellerie papale’, see Pietri, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 1482–94; P. A. McShane, *La Romanitas et le pape Léon le Grand: l’apport culturel des institutions impériales à la formation des structures ecclésiastiques* (1979), 313–74.

as these can be recovered from the pope's counter-charges. In the first case, Gelasius purports to quote Andromachus' 'public and official' proclamation verbatim: 'diseases occur for this reason, that demons are not worshipped and sacrifice is not paid to the god Februarius' (3). Although it is inconceivable that Andromachus had really had these exact words posted up in public, the pope's précis is unlikely to be entirely gratuitous. The sacrifice to Februarius, for example, looks like a sly paraphrase of a statement that the traditional entertainments of February needed to be maintained.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, we can confidently infer from the triumphant flourish with which Gelasius produces Livy to demonstrate that the ancient purpose of the Lupercalia was not disease-prevention, but the promotion of fertility, that Andromachus had mentioned a current outbreak of disease as one reason for holding the festival. However, this same passage also betrays the limits of Gelasius' interest in the terms of Andromachus' proclamation, for he rests his case against him on this point. The argument here smacks of sophistry: Gelasius is an unsafe guide to the passage of Livy that he cites, and may well have misrepresented its import in his eagerness to seize upon the 'original' meaning of the festival.<sup>21</sup> The readiness with which the pope then shrugs off Andromachus suggests that he might have introduced Livy principally as a means of asserting his cultural authority, to serve him in the confrontation with his more immediately relevant opponents.

Only after he has established his new plural targets does Gelasius introduce what becomes his most consistent theme: the claim that the festival promotes *salus*, safety or salvation, specifically for the Lupercalianists (that is, the *patroni*) themselves. This dominates the second half of his text: 'If such things are great and divine and bring safety', he asks, 'why does it shame you to celebrate them yourselves?' (17);<sup>22</sup> 'You see for yourselves what kind of safety impends for you' (19); run about in the old-fashioned way, he demands again, 'so that by celebrating more devotedly a thing which is divine and salutary for you, as you say it is, you should be able to provide more and more for your safety' (24b). He harps on the theme relentlessly: 'if it is divine, if it is salutary for you ... why do you weaken the causes of your safety?' (25b); 'if it is salutary, if it is divine ...' (26); 'if it does good, if it is salutary ...' (27); 'If it is good, if it is divine, if it is salutary ...' (29).

The theme of safety/salvation is clearly important to the pope. But it is less evident that it was as important to the Lupercalianists themselves, despite his claim to be quoting them and despite A. W. Holleman's contention, in what remains the only modern book-length analysis of the text, that the rite had in fact become a syncretist vehicle for personal salvation.<sup>23</sup> Holleman's claim that Andromachus had been the standard-bearer for this view is demonstrably false, for the theme of *salus* is associated not with his proclamation, but with the *patroni*.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, even here it surfaces in a rather curious way. Gelasius first invokes the term when insisting that 'nostri mores' had caused Rome's recent misfortunes:

<sup>20</sup> A repeated allusion to 'your god Februarius' as an object of sacrifice during pestilence (11) suggests that this was more than a casual association of ideas. Efforts to identify Gelasius' god — Holleman, *op. cit.* (n. 12), 10, 159–77, takes 'Februarius' as an adjective disguising Faunus; W. M. Green, 'The Lupercalia in the fifth century', *Classical Philology* 26 (1931), 60–9, at 64–5, saw a late antique invention — are probably misplaced. For the traditional association between Februarius-Februatus-Lupercalia, see T. P. Wiseman, *Remus: A Roman Myth* (1995), 81–2.

<sup>21</sup> Gelasius cites Livy as evidence specifically that the Lupercalia had been introduced 'propter sterilitatem ... mulierum quae tunc acciderat' (12), thus ascribing the *sterilitas* to prehistoric Rome. For third-century developments, see T. P. Wiseman, 'The god of the Lupercal', *Journal of Roman Studies* 85 (1995), 1–22, at 14–15 (quoting Gelasius as a fragment of Livy at n. 117), and B. Valli "'Lupercis nudis lustratur antiquum oppidum Palatinum": Alcune riflessioni sui Lupercalia', *Florentia* 2 (2007), 101–54, at 120–8.

<sup>22</sup> 'Salus' and its cognates here recur four times in three successive sentences: 'Si vere ergo profitemini hoc sacrum, ac potius exsecramentum, vobis esse *salutare*, ipsi celebrare more maiorum, ipsi cum resticulo nudi discurrite, ut rite vestrae *salutis* ludibria peragatis. Si magna sunt, si divina, si *salutifera*, si in his vitae vestrae pendet integritas, cur vos pudet per vos ipsos talia celebrare? si pudet et dedecus est, itane *salutiferum* est et divinum profuturum, quod vos ipsi dedecus esse fateamini?'

<sup>23</sup> Holleman, *op. cit.* (n. 12), especially 47–51, 60, 148–50.

<sup>24</sup> Holleman, *op. cit.* (n. 12), 47–8.



‘non Lupercalia quae sunt pro vestra salute sublata’ (15).<sup>25</sup> He then, in a passage cited earlier, accuses the *patroni* of having resigned to the lowly rabble ‘a cult which you think to merit your respect and to bring safety’ (16: ‘venerandum vobis cultum et salutiferum quem putatis’); this is the first occurrence in the text of the key term ‘salutifer’. And here it is an afterthought, where Gelasius is reading the thoughts of his opponents (‘quem putatis’) rather than quoting any alleged statements.<sup>26</sup> From this he moves quickly to impute the much more dramatic claim: ‘If you truly declare this rite, or rather this utter wrong (*hoc sacrum, ac potius exsecrumentum*), to be salutary (*salutare*) for you, run naked yourselves, that you might achieve the mockery (*ludibria*) of your safety properly ...’ (17). We must therefore ask whether the pope is not merely amplifying his own rhetoric here, developing a congenial topic, rather than actually engaging a central contention from his opponents — much as Augustine had claimed to lay bare the fundamental basis of paganism in *City of God*. For all his harping on the question, he still seems to underplay what would have been a very strong hand if his opponents *had* actually committed themselves to the proposition, as ostensible Christians, that their own personal ‘salvation’ could come from sponsoring a pagan rite. Any such claim would seem to invite anathema rather than the elaborate sarcasm which informs this part of his argument. Moreover, in describing the festival, Gelasius no fewer than seven times twins ‘salutaris’ with ‘divinus’ (17 bis, 24b, 25b, 26, 29 bis), an association which the Christian Lupercalianists themselves are most unlikely to have proclaimed in these terms.<sup>27</sup> It hardly fits with the argument, which he also reports, that the festival was merely an *imago*, an inoffensive shadow (27).<sup>28</sup> We might therefore suspect that Gelasius is here conjuring an ideology on his opponents’ behalf. As with his version of Andromachus’ proclamation, we might suppose that a term such as ‘salutifer’ had been used in the argument, perhaps to justify the holding of a morale-boosting festival at a time of disease, and that the pope is giving this a significance which his opponents had never intended.<sup>29</sup>

A further aspect of Gelasius’ presentation of the situation raises deeper problems. Was Andromachus proposing to revive a defunct festival, or merely to continue an existing one? Gelasius seems to accept its survival through 410 C.E. and until as ‘recently’ as the conflict between Anthemius and Ricimer in 472 C.E. (25a). There is, we must recall, no external evidence on either side. Sceptics might dismiss the inclusion of the Lupercalia in the Calendar of Polemius Silvius as antiquarian pedantry. On the other hand, the imperfect tense used in the fifth-century scholia on Juvenal, which explain that ‘sterile women used to offer themselves to the purifying Luperci and were beaten with a stick’, need mean no more than that the Luperci themselves no longer performed the ritual, which suits

<sup>25</sup> See Pomarès, *op. cit.* (n. 10), 174 n. 2, for the ‘négligence de style’ of this expression, which seems too awkward to carry any significant meaning.

<sup>26</sup> In this section Gelasius seems carefully to avoid any claim to be quoting his opponents. Having begun by inviting them to speak (‘Sed quid dicitis vos ipsi?’), he had given their thoughts about the festival (‘quod vobis singulariter prodesse putatis’) and about the devotion with which it should be conducted (‘celebranda ducitis’), before here presenting their alleged thoughts on its salutary effects. His recourse to the same terminology at 24a (‘apparet ... nihil Lupercalia profuisse etiam eo tempore quo sicut dictum est, *ut putatis*, competente ordine gererentur’) seems to refer back specifically to this section: ‘non longe impari cultu et devotione ea ducitis celebranda quam profanitatibus vestrae celebrare maiores.’

<sup>27</sup> If the term had been used by Gelasius’ opponents, it was probably incidental: perhaps in conjunction with the imperial imprimatur previously given to the festival (cf. below, n. 72). Symmachus provides abundant examples of relevant late antique usage: *Ep.* 4.4; 5.95; 6.33; 7.13, 38; *Rel.* 3.19; 8.1; 13.1; 18.3; 21.1; 29.1; 30.4; 33.4; 34.7; 35.3; 36.1; 43.2; 44.1; 49.4. Fifth-century emperors operated by the same code: Majorian, *Novell.* 1 is subscribed ‘manu divina’.

<sup>28</sup> This is one of a battery of arguments rebutted in the final sections of the text (cf. above, n. 18). Gelasius uses the singular here, but there is no reason to suppose (as Holleman, *op. cit.* (n. 12), 47) that he is addressing Andromachus.

<sup>29</sup> Immediately before alleging that his opponents thought the festival’s effects salutary, Gelasius had declared that ‘vobis singulariter prodesse putatis’ (16): a benefit conceived in such terms need not have been spiritual (cf. below, at n. 77).

Gelasius' own criticisms;<sup>30</sup> equally inconclusive is the fifth-century comment by Servius that the Luperci 'used to celebrate the Lupercalia in the nude'.<sup>31</sup> Our text at first seems quite clearly, and consistently, to imply that the issue concerned a planned revival. Gelasius thus asks whether plague, barrenness, and the continuous storm of wars had occurred because the Lupercalia had been abolished, 'propter sublata Lupercalia'; and immediately answers this with another question, about the sufferings of Tuscia and Aemilia and the other provinces, now depopulated, which were devastated 'before the Lupercalia were abolished', 'ante ... quam Lupercalia tollerentur' (13); and the same phrase, on the 'abolition' of the Lupercalia, recurs intermittently, five times in the next nine paragraphs (14, 15, 16, 21, 22), until Gelasius challenges his opponents directly and seems to make everything explicit: he will omit ancient history, but notes that there certainly had been outbreaks of pestilence before the Lupercalia 'were abolished, in my time', 'antequam meis temporibus tollerentur' (23); he deals briefly with the related allegation from his opponents that the current sufferings were caused by the sudden abolition of an ancient tradition (24a: 'repente sublata sunt').

The case therefore seems clear. It is slightly disconcerting, however, to find no hint in the actual condemnation of Andromachus, or in the criticism of the *patroni*, that anyone was proposing gratuitously to *revive* a pagan ritual which was already in abeyance, although any such initiative ought to have offered the pope a devastating argument.<sup>32</sup> Far more serious, moreover, are those passages which suggest that the rite was still in fact alive: most notably at the very end of the text, when the pope laboriously spells out a conclusion that seems to imply the very opposite of what he has previously been saying:

I do not doubt that my predecessors also perhaps did this [sc. tried to have the festival abolished], and tried at imperial audiences to have these things removed (*haec summovenda*); and because (since these evils continue even today) it is not certain that they were heard, *this* is the reason that the imperial authority itself has failed, and it is for this reason also (that is, since the Lupercalia have not been removed (*non remotis etiam Lupercalibus*)), that the Roman name has reached the very last extremity. And for this reason I now advise that they be removed ... (31)

So here we have an apparent contradiction of the preceding statements: the language of abolition is replaced by the statement, offered three times in this one sentence, that the Lupercalia still continued.<sup>33</sup> Commentators have tended to ignore this contradiction, simply preferring one or other of the implied situations.<sup>34</sup> We need, however, to *explain* the mixed message in the pope's presentation.

The explanation for the complexities presented above is at one level straightforward. The pope's arguments are confusing because he was arguing a difficult case, which did not lend itself to plain expression. He could neither laugh off the Lupercalia, nor deliver an authoritative death-sentence. His rhetoric suggests instead that his opponents had been

<sup>30</sup> *Schol. Vet. in Iuv.* 2.142: 'steriles mulieres februantibus Lupercis se offerebant et ferula verberabantur', cited in this context by Alan Cameron, 'Vergil illustrated between Pagans and Christians: reconsidering "the late-4th c. Classical Revival"', the dates of the manuscripts, and the places of production of the Latin Classics', *JRA* 17 (2004), 502–25, at 513. On the scholia, see further the postscript below: p. 180.

<sup>31</sup> Servius, *In Aen.* 8.663.8: 'consuetudo permansit ut nudi Lupercalia celebrarent.' See C. Murgia, 'The dating of Servius revisited', *CP* 98 (2003), 45–69, at 53.

<sup>32</sup> Gelasius seems to accept a distinction between the Lupercalia and the ancient pagan superstitions which he challenges his opponents to reintroduce: 'sacrificetur in templis daemonum et in Capitolio profana vanitas crebretur!' (28).

<sup>33</sup> The shift in this passage from *tollere* to compounds of *movere* is merely stylistic: the two are used earlier as exact synonyms (14: 'propter quam auferendam...'; 'propter quam ... removendam').

<sup>34</sup> Holleman, *op. cit.* (n. 12), 7, thus supposes that Gelasius himself had recently 'banned' the festival; Markus, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 132, suggests an earlier, but ineffectual, prohibition of Christian participation by Gelasius; H. Chadwick, *Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology and Philosophy* (1981), 12–14, presents Andromachus as seeking to maintain a continuous tradition; Nautin, *op. cit.* (n. 9), posits an attempt to re-establish the festival.

giving him as good as they got from him here, and his very final words — ‘not even now do you yourselves decide to be willing to desist from insane ventures’ (32) — betray how little he could expect to achieve. The inconclusiveness of Gelasius’ anathemas, so different from the authority he deployed against the pretensions of rival churchmen, invites us to reconsider the social dynamics of the festival.<sup>35</sup> The continuing demand for the Lupercalia has commonly been ascribed to the ordinary people of Rome, who (we are told) wanted their ancient comfortable traditions during a period of uncertainty and natural disaster, and public-spirited Christian aristocrats like Andromachus saw no harm, or indeed saw positive good, in letting them have these.<sup>36</sup> But the superstitions of the populace are entirely absent from Gelasius’ riposte, and he does not think to accuse his opponents of pandering to popular taste. The last word of his document, ‘perpenditis’, is significant: his arguments are directed squarely at the considered preferences of his aristocratic addressees. No less than in Caesar’s time, the fifth-century Lupercalia engaged the active interest of the city’s élite.

We must acknowledge how little we know about the late antique Lupercalia. Gelasius describes it only negatively: *nobiles* no longer ran naked, matrons were no longer beaten ‘with their bodies stripped naked in public’ (16). However, his readiness to accept that the debased festival was still the Lupercalia implies that it was recognizably continuous with the classical form, and continued to involve running by (more or less) naked men along a customary course, women being beaten, and an atmosphere of hilarity. As was seen earlier, much remains unclear about exactly what happened in classical times, despite the (relatively) abundant testimonia. Even basic questions about the route of the runners, about the character of their race, and about their activities as they ran remain unanswerable.<sup>37</sup> However, John North’s analysis of Caesar’s Lupercalia conveys nicely both the joyfully carnivalesque aspect of the ritual programme — this was a ceremony that both bystanders and participants could actively enjoy — and the multiplicity of religious associations that were available to those involved.<sup>38</sup> This combination helps explain the longevity of the festival, and also its malleability. There had been several important evolutions during the imperial period. A generation after Caesar, Augustus had imposed restrictions on the runners; the language used of the event by such eyewitnesses as Juvenal and Plutarch confirms that the ritual had been toned down to suit the standards of Augustan decorum.<sup>39</sup> Those Luperci attested epigraphically during the early imperial period meanwhile suggest that the priesthood had become a solidly respectable preserve of upwardly-mobile municipal equestrians. A celebrated tomb relief shows Ti. Claudius Liberalis, dead at sixteen, in his double aspect as parading *eques* and posturing Lupercus, decently wrapped as the latter in a kilt (Pl. III).<sup>40</sup> A number of equestrian *praefecti* declare themselves as Luperci on their tombstones; in several cases this is their only association with the city of Rome.<sup>41</sup>

Two tantalizing items of visual evidence from the third century might seem to imply a further transformation. An African mosaic and a Roman sarcophagus (reused for a Christian burial in the fourth century) (Pl. IV) both show a woman being lifted up by the

<sup>35</sup> For Gelasius’ authoritarian approach to dealings with Constantinople, see conveniently Ullmann, *op. cit.* (n. 14), 162–216; cf. 226–36 on his supervision, ‘als Oberhirt’, of his Italian colleagues.

<sup>36</sup> Duval, *op. cit.* (n. 9), 259; Green, *op. cit.* (n. 20), 68–9: ‘a performance of the superstitious Christian mob.’

<sup>37</sup> See the discussion in North, pp. 148–9, above.

<sup>38</sup> See North, p. 147, above. Wiseman, *op. cit.* (n. 21), 15, remarks aptly on the ‘sheer sexiness of the Lupercal’: ‘one can see why it was such a popular spectacle.’

<sup>39</sup> Suet., *Aug.* 31.4; Juv., *Sat.* 2.142; Plut., *Caes.* 61.

<sup>40</sup> *CIL* 14.3624; Wiseman, *op. cit.* (n. 20), 82–4.

<sup>41</sup> Attested Luperci are usefully presented in J. Rüpke, *Fasti Sacerdotum: Die Mitglieder der Priesterschaften und das sakrale Funktionspersonal römischer, griechischer, orientalischer und jüdisch-christlicher Kulte in der Stadt Rom von 300 v. Chr. bis 499 n. Chr.* (2005); the same material is also available in J. Scheid and M. G. Granino Cecere, ‘Les sacerdores équestres’, in S. Demougin and M. Th. Raepsaet-Charlier (eds), *Ordo equester: Histoire d’une aristocratie*, Collection de l’École Française de Rome (1999), 1–112.



assistants of the solemn-looking and modestly-skirted Lupercus for her beating, her clothing hoisted up and the whip held menacingly above her.<sup>42</sup> This no longer seems like treatment to which noblewomen would deliberately expose themselves, like Plutarch's 'children at school'. The significance of these images is difficult to assess, without either any accompanying text or any comparable images from the earlier period.<sup>43</sup> It is tempting to relate it, however, to an apparent increase in the social profile of attested Luperci, where senators come to monopolize an admittedly much reduced sample:<sup>44</sup> the sarcophagus certainly suggests that the Luperci each now commanded a much more formidable retinue than had their predecessors. In the early fourth century, the Luperci were bracketed in Christian polemic with the aristocratic *Salii*, as examples of ludicrous absurdity from men who ought to have known better.<sup>45</sup> By the end of the same century, Prudentius could still present Luperci as prospective 'luminaries of the senate', and would dwell upon the paradoxical ignobility of their sportive nudity.<sup>46</sup>

Prudentius was writing in the aftermath of the Theodosian anti-sacrifice laws, during the generation which saw the public expression of explicit pagan devotion disappear.<sup>47</sup> By 395 C.E. the traditional pagan holidays had formally lost their status as *dies feriat*.<sup>48</sup> However, fifteen years later, the Lupercalia was still apparently being run (25a). One significant change must already have occurred: the animal sacrifice which had traditionally been an intrinsic part of the preliminaries must have been eliminated.<sup>49</sup> But overall, the Lupercalia lent itself rather well to adaptation to the new rules governing public religiosity in the Christian Empire. For unusually within the classical religious tradition, sacrifice was not the climax of the festival but a prelude;<sup>50</sup> a collegiate rather than a public event, it could have evolved into a solemnly hearty breakfast, before the runners emerged to begin their course. However, Theodosius' legislation also meant that the rival *sodalitates* of Luperci which had traditionally been responsible for the Lupercalia, like all other public priest-hoods, would already have been on the verge of extinction by the time Alaric arrived before Rome; no new cohorts of young men were being inducted into the colleges to supply the runners.<sup>51</sup>

The changes described by Gelasius can best be seen as a response to this problem. As authentic Luperci died out, a decision was made to continue the Lupercalia without them. Such a decision must have been made within the élite from whom the priests were previously recruited. There is no need to revive outdated ideas of a 'pagan revival' among the

<sup>42</sup> H. Solin and H. Brandenburg, 'Paganer Fruchtbarkeitsritus oder Martyriumsdarstellung? Zum Grabrelief der Elia Afanacia im Museum der Prätextat-Katakomba zu Rom', *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 1980, 271–84.

<sup>43</sup> These images lend themselves to over-interpretation: Holleman, op. cit. (n. 12), 138–44, especially 142: 'an act of public denunciation, confession, and penance, with a view to obtaining salvation'; cf. Wiseman, op. cit. (n. 21), 16: 'the high spirits have disappeared, replaced by a cold-blooded formality.' Cf. Postscript, p. 179 below.

<sup>44</sup> Rüpke, op. cit. (n. 41), 1:22. It should be noted that despite the fourth-century epigraphic habit of commemorating even minor senatorial offices and priest-hoods, the only attested post-Aurelian Lupercus is L. Crepereius Rogatus, commemorated as 'insignis lupercus' as well as *Vilvir* and *pontifex solis* (*CIL* 6.1397); cf. *PLRE* 1 Rogatus 2.

<sup>45</sup> Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* 1.20.2, 21.45.

<sup>46</sup> Prudentius, *Per.* 2.517–18, 10.161–5; *C. Symm.* 2.862–3.

<sup>47</sup> For the cultural impact on post-Theodosian Rome of 'popes and emperors', see M. Salzman, 'The Christianization of sacred time and sacred space', in W. V. Harris (ed.), *The Transformations of Urbs Roma in Late Antiquity*, *JRA* Supplement 33 (1999), 123–34. A corresponding analysis of the scope available to other actors is much needed.

<sup>48</sup> *CTh* 2.8.22, alluding to a previous law. Macrobius, *Sat.* 1.16.5 includes the Lupercalia among the *dies feriat*; cf. Festus 85M/60L.

<sup>49</sup> Green, op. cit. (n. 20), 67–8; doubted (but without argument) by Holleman, op. cit. (n. 12), 6 n. 5.

<sup>50</sup> For the initial sacrifice, see Wiseman, op. cit. (n. 20), 80–1. Wiseman's proposal of 'a final sacrifice at the Comitium' at the end of the day (82) is attractive but stretches the evidence considerably.

<sup>51</sup> The data presented for the two decades 390–410 C.E. in Rüpke, op. cit. (n. 41), 1:540–8, tell their own story: twenty-nine pagan priest-hoods are attested in 390, none in 410 C.E. The last entry, for Fl. Macrobius Longinianus (*PPO* 408), is problematic: *PLRE* 2, 686–7: 'Longinianus'. Wiseman, op. cit. (n. 20), 81–2, suggested that the runners each year were newly-inducted Luperci, 'blooded' at the initial sacrifice by senior members.

Roman aristocracy; however, in locating the crucial change to the festival in the later fourth century we might credit those responsible with a determination to maintain their cultural heritage under the new dispensation, and an ingenuity in contriving the means to do so.<sup>52</sup> When Gelasius accuses the noble *patroni* of being ‘the first’ to offend against the Lupercalia (16), he must therefore be speaking comparatively: his addressees were not themselves responsible for changing the shape of the festival, but were implicated in a transformation which had predated his own abolitionist efforts.<sup>53</sup> The attested survival of the Lupercalia into the fifth century presupposes that a mechanism had been developed for bringing together the teams of runners, providing them with their equipment, and providing the rehearsal necessary to ensure that the event did not collapse into confusion. The festival that Gelasius describes has thus become professionalized. The ‘vile and vulgar persons’ derided by the pope (16) are most straightforwardly seen as real actors, and probably actresses too: while theatrical professionals might have been employed as assistants to the Luperci prior to the Theodosian period, now they replaced them altogether.<sup>54</sup> The vocabulary suits such an interpretation: a law of Gratian had treated women born ‘ex viliore sorte’ as potential actresses, Theodosius I had sought to restrict the posting of portraits of ‘vile actors’, while Ammianus’ collective noun for the thespians of Rome is ‘theatrical vileness’.<sup>55</sup> It also suits the point raised in defence of the festival, that it was only a harmless *imago* (27). But above all it explains why Gelasius dwells so little on the actual performers of the rite, and seems so remarkably unscandalized by the fact that whip-wielding pagans were running through the streets of Rome. Actors were uniquely ‘un-christianizable’, and beyond the bishop’s reach; hence Gelasius’ concentration instead upon their backers.<sup>56</sup>

A further reason for the conclusion that this had become an organized, choreographed occasion relates to the one element which is recorded for the fifth-century Lupercalia, but not for its classical ancestor: the pope calls his enemies ‘defenders of foul songs’ (19). They claimed that by publicizing the wickedness of individuals, other wrongdoers would be deterred. And this chanting included an explicit roll-call, the effectiveness of which the pope denies, since miscreants are chanted at ‘not for punishment but for a sort of merriment, and as a celebration of names’ (20).<sup>57</sup> This aspect is not recorded in the classical period.<sup>58</sup> But if professional actors had now replaced the Luperci, they would also, of course, be trained as singers; for the organizers of the festival, choral barracking of notorious wrongdoers would be an effective way of exploiting the actors’ professional skills, and also an ingenious adaptation of the ceremony’s traditional function of purging the city.

<sup>52</sup> A. Cameron, ‘The last pagans of Rome’, in W. V. Harris (ed.), *The Transformations of Urbs Roma in Late Antiquity*, JRA Supplement 33 (1999), 109–21, convincingly demolishes notions of an organized ‘pagan opposition’, but invites questions about the scope available for residual pagan activity. For some useful suggestions, presented as a critique of Cameron, see C. W. Hedrick Jr., *History and Silence: The Purge and Rehabilitation of Memory in Late Antiquity* (2000), 47–54.

<sup>53</sup> Comparable examples of this use of *primus* in Christian polemic include Augustine, *serm.* 162A (*serm. Denis* 19, in G. Morin (ed.), *Miscellanea Agostiniana* 1 (1930), 98–111), 8; Arnobius, *Adv. Nat.* 3.6.

<sup>54</sup> This suggestion is anticipated by Cameron, *op. cit.* (n. 30), 512–13, who interprets the use of actors as evidence that the celebration was merely a ‘picturesque revival’. For intrinsic associations between the Lupercalia and the theatre, see Wiseman, *op. cit.* (n. 21), 10. See further the Postscript, below, p. 180.

<sup>55</sup> *CTh* 15.7.4 (380), 12 (394); *Amm. Marc.* 28.4.32.

<sup>56</sup> R. Lim, ‘Converting the unchristianizable: the baptism of stage performers in Late Antiquity’, in K. Mills and A. Grafton (eds), *Seeing and Believing: Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (2003), 84–126.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Per quamdam laetitiam et celebratam nominum decantata est.’ Here, and again in the same sentence (20: ‘ut sit unde nominum sollempnia celebrentur’), the editions emend ‘nominum’ to ‘numinum’. The ms reading should be preserved in both instances: in the latter case, Gelasius is saying that a malefactor targeted in the songs, being indispensable to the festival and so invested with a spurious religiosity, preens himself ‘that he should be the source for the celebration of the rites of the names, which cannot be held without chanting of accusations’.

<sup>58</sup> Cicero’s sly dig at the readiness of a fellow-Lupercus to prosecute his client (*Pro Caelio* 26: ‘nomina deferunt inter se sodales’) is irrelevant here, despite Holleman, *op. cit.* (n. 12), 71–2 (‘the Luperci must have been famous for it’), 83, 152.

Whoever hired the performers will also, of course, have had a certain control over their scripts. This brings us back to Gelasius, and to the question of how the festival created so much controversy in this particular year. For it is not difficult to infer that the errant presbyter (and perhaps even the indulgent pope himself) was on the list of wrongdoers to be barracked at the coming festival.<sup>59</sup> Andromachus was presumably responsible for arranging the festival for the year in question, and good Christian though he was, he refused to back down when the pope made what will have seemed a highly self-interested demand that it be called off. His proclamation on behalf of the Lupercalia indicates that Andromachus held public office at Rome; given his previous eminence at court, he might reasonably be identified as urban prefect.<sup>60</sup>

Such a milieu is suggested by one of the most curious turns in Gelasius' argument. He shifts suddenly from the implicit admission of wrongdoing in the refusal of the *patroni* to run the Lupercalia themselves, to 'those Castors of yours, from whose cult you have refused to desist: why have they done so little to provide fair seas?' (18). A (probably) fifth-century geographer tells us that the people of Rome 'go out with the urban prefect or consul' each year in a 'sollemnitas iocunda' to the temple of the Dioscuri in Portus (on 27 January), for what must have been (at least when the weather held) a delightful day out in a famously scenic spot.<sup>61</sup> Here, then, public officials are attested leading a decidedly non-Christian procession, only a fortnight before the Lupercalia. Gelasius' comments here are aimed not at Andromachus but at the *patroni*: might these then have included a consul (since when these were available to lead the celebrations, they will have taken precedence over city prefects)? After a brief hiatus in 491–492 C.E., when there were no Western consuls, Gelasius' papacy coincided with a restored series of properly Roman consuls who were present in the city — for example, Asterius gave his inaugural games there in January 494 — and were therefore able to lend their dignity to the celebration of the Castores.<sup>62</sup> In 494 C.E., moreover, this festival fell on a Sunday, when Gelasius will have been particularly sensitive to any conspicuous absentees from his cathedral.

Recourse to the calendar might also offer a solution to the problem raised earlier, about the status of the Lupercalia. If the festival was now organized by public officials, and carried out by professionals, the event would depend each year on the energy and commitment of the magistrate in charge (and of course on the subordinates who ran his office); after a certain point, it simply could not happen if the organizer declined to see it through. And such a failure (whatever the reason for it) could be described as 'abolition', but there would be no formal legal suppression. And indeed, we should note that the very *first* time Gelasius discusses the question, he says that the festival had been 'intermissum', 'temporarily stopped' (12), a much weaker word than 'sublata' which then consistently replaces it. So here, as in his talk of *salus*, we might again suspect that Gelasius has allowed his rhetoric to escalate. The interruption had presumably occurred after Anthemius' reign, and after Gelasius had become active in Roman politics; it need amount to no more than a single prefect's term of office. The four years of Gelasius' actual papacy seem too short to accommodate the required sequence of events; but we might look earlier — for example, to 487 C.E., six years before he became pope, but when he was already prominent as his predecessor Felix's archdeacon (hence, still 'in my times'). That year, 15 February was not merely a Sunday, but the Sunday marking the beginning of the Lenten season, a day which was flagged in the sermons of Leo as one requiring particular observance.<sup>63</sup> The

<sup>59</sup> This connection was noted by Green, *op. cit.* (n. 20), 66–7.

<sup>60</sup> As *magister officiorum*, Andromachus already held the rank of *vir illustris*; the urban prefecture was the only office at Rome with the same level of seniority. Both *praefectus annonae* and *vicarius urbis Romae* were still *spectabiles* in the fifth century.

<sup>61</sup> Aethicus, *Cosmographia* 1.25 (ed. A. Riese, *Geographi Latini Minores* (1878), 83); cf. Duval, *op. cit.* (n. 9), 256.

<sup>62</sup> For details see R. S. Bagnall, A. Cameron, S. R. Schwartz and K. A. Worp, *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (1987), 516–27.

<sup>63</sup> Leo, *serm.* 48.

conscientious Christian official in charge that year might well have thought it improper to keep the masses from their masses, and suspended the festival.<sup>64</sup> Gelasius acknowledges that there had been an outbreak of disease in Campania, crop failures in Gaul and Africa, and (perhaps) a military emergency while the festival was suspended (13–14); but there is no reason to suppose that these misfortunes had been advertised specifically as the reasons for its resumption.<sup>65</sup> Rather, the normal holiday cycle was being resumed.

The Lupercalia should therefore be seen as an annual option for the official in charge. Although there will have been some difficulty in ensuring the right balance between public hilarity and public order, the rewards for the organizer arguably outweighed any headaches. For Andromachus and his peers, the Lupercalia should be counted among ‘the opportunities so essential to them, to be seen by whole crowds, active in the pursuit of their religion’:<sup>66</sup> for the activity of maintaining traditions a thousand years old should be allowed its religious significance. In fact, it must have been rather a fine opportunity. Visually, the Lupercalia must have been a very impressive occasion, and indeed more impressive than ever in the fifth century, involving as it did a rollicking promenade through some of the most historic parts of Rome — the areas dominated by ‘theatres, porticoes and temples’, which by this period most of the populace will normally have had little reason to visit.<sup>67</sup> The ancient Forum, in particular, was now maintained purely for show: the Basilica Aemilia was still full of rubble after the sack of 410 C.E., but the façade facing the Forum was maintained; the paving-stones of the Forum were also kept in good repair, although there is no evidence that the space was in regular use.<sup>68</sup> On the day of the Lupercalia, however, the Forum became a stage-set for the climax of the event, when the runners came down the Via Sacra towards their goal.

Moreover, we can suggest that Andromachus would be *seen* to be in charge of proceedings. In fact, we might even suggest that the late antique Lupercalia had taken on a coincidental resemblance to that entirely exceptional occasion in 44 B.C.E., when Julius Caesar, seated on his throne on the rostra, was waiting for the runners as they arrived in the Forum.<sup>69</sup> Normally, we must assume, the classical Luperci had not required such a reception; the running was but one stage in their proceedings, on what was above all their day.<sup>70</sup> As priests themselves, they were capable of taking charge. But once the formal sacral element was removed, and the runners reduced to hired performers, the *ending* of the run would inevitably have required management. And here, at the end of the run, is where we must surely expect to find our Andromachus: who thus becomes (like Caesar in 44 B.C.E.) the star of the show, as master of ceremonies and (at least as he brought the day’s festivities to a close) the focus of attention. The senatorial aristocracy still thrived on such occasions as this in the late fifth century:<sup>71</sup> the Lupercalia, moreover, was an event guaranteed to draw the crowds, which (it might be added) must have been relatively cheap

<sup>64</sup> *CTh* 2.8.25 (408) had forbidden public entertainment on Sundays: ‘nullas edi penitus patimur voluptates’.

<sup>65</sup> The question is resumed later, where Günther broke up the transmitted text to create a sequence 24a–25a–24b–25b, improving the flow of the argument (cf. Pomarès, *op. cit.* (n. 10), 182 n. 2: the proposed tripartite analysis of the pope’s case depends on accepting the hypothesis) but perhaps obscuring Gelasius’ actual train of thought. 24a deals with food shortages and pestilence, following 23; 25a introduces the separate topic of military defeat and civil disorder. It might be that the former was the more immediate issue and was treated separately.

<sup>66</sup> J. F. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, A.D. 364–425* (1975), 365.

<sup>67</sup> J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (1989), 423.

<sup>68</sup> For a convenient summary, see R. Meneghini and R. Santangeli Valenziani, *Roma nell’altomedioevo: Topografia e urbanistica della città dal V al X secolo* (2004), 157–75.

<sup>69</sup> See North, pp. 155–6 above.

<sup>70</sup> For the possible role of the *flamen dialis*, attested at Ovid, *Fasti* 2.282 (‘flamen ad haec prisco more Dialis erat’), see P. Marchetti, ‘Autour de Romulus et des “Lupercalia”: Une explication préliminaire’, *Les Études Classiques* 70 (2002), 77–92, at 89–92. It is likely that senior members of the *sodalitates Lupercorum* played a significant role: cf. above, n. 51.

<sup>71</sup> For the evidence of the Colosseum inscriptions, see A. Chastagnol, *Le Sénat romain sous le règne d’Odoacre: Recherches sur l’épigraphie du Colisée au Ve siècle* (1966).

— few days in the sun would cost a senator of Rome as little as the fee for a single performance by a troupe of actors.

What is more, the Lupercalia presented its organizers more particularly with an opportunity to put ‘Old Rome’ on impressive display. Unfolding as it did across the *centro storico*, it was an occasion which took its spectators back into the unfathomable past of the great city. This aspect helps explain another of Gelasius’ asides, where he notes: ‘When the emperor Anthemius came to Rome, the Lupercalia were certainly (*utique*) carried out — and yet so great a pestilence spread that it was hardly to be endured’ (13). The verb, ‘venit’, betrays a characteristically Roman perspective, since Anthemius had not been a mere visitor but a reigning emperor, resident in Rome for five continuous years (equalling the fifth-century record).<sup>72</sup> He had arrived with much fanfare in April 467 C.E., so will not have experienced his first Lupercalia until nine months later, when he was comfortably established, and at the height of his popularity; this was the first of his five opportunities to watch the show, and of his five missed chances to suppress it officially (although in 470 C.E. it fell on a Sunday).<sup>73</sup> But Anthemius had arrived from New Rome; and festivals like the Lupercalia were marvellously designed to show off Old Rome to advantage to the likes of him and his entourage. For Anthemius will already have been familiar with a ‘Lupercalia’; the *Book of Ceremonies* records in faithful detail the elaborate rite of spring performed at Constantinople under that name, an impressive enough ceremony dating apparently from the city’s foundation, but a pale imitation of the original, confined to the hippodrome and conducted by charioteers.<sup>74</sup> At Rome he would be shown the real thing. We should suppose that his senatorial hosts (like their ancestors with other imperial tourists)<sup>75</sup> relished the chance to provide commentary, just as a century previously, at a much lower social level, the Roman friends of the young African rhetor Augustine seem to have interpreted the ceremony for him as he watched it in the Forum. Their misinformation has left its traces in *City of God*, where he explains how the runners’ course ‘up and down’ the Via Sacra was interpreted as a replay of the Great Flood, a fabrication which cannot conceivably be foisted upon Varro.<sup>76</sup> Augustine, who was in Rome in February 384 C.E., is instead giving us the benefit of autopsy, and betraying the incompetence of his guides.

Anthemius had clearly been a conspicuous presence. Gelasius can ask why the festival had benefited neither him nor his eventual nemesis Ricimer, suggesting that the latter had also found it useful to attend during his long period of ascendancy (25a).<sup>77</sup> As Gelasius’ papacy began, in 492 C.E., a new overlord, Theoderic the Ostrogoth, was establishing himself in northern Italy.<sup>78</sup> The senators of Rome, who had collaborated comfortably with the previous regime, had particular reason at this time to reaffirm their grip on the ceremonial levers, and so to resist any papal interference in one of their most effective means of self-presentation.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>72</sup> A. Gillett, ‘Rome, Ravenna and the last western emperors’, *PBSR* 69 (2001), 131–67, at 132–3; cf. 165, on Anthemius’ success in winning support through ‘appropriations of the urban rhythms of Rome’.

<sup>73</sup> The solemn oath taken by Anthemius before Pope Hilarius at St Peter’s, reported elsewhere by Gelasius (*ep.* 13), indicates an effective working relationship between emperor and pope.

<sup>74</sup> Const. Porphyri., *De Caerim.* 1.79 (70), 82 (73); Duval, *op. cit.* (n. 9), 223–43.

<sup>75</sup> The prize example is Constantius II’s visit in 357 C.E. For his senatorially guided tour, see Symmachus, *Rel.* 3.8; cf. *Amm. Marc.* 16.10.13–17.

<sup>76</sup> Aug., *De civ. Dei* 18.12; cf. North, above, p. 156. The ascription to Varro is accepted by Wiseman, *op. cit.* (n. 21), 7.

<sup>77</sup> Pomarès mistranslates here: the pronoun in ‘cur istis minime profuerunt’ (25a) is masculine not neuter, and the expression comparable to the adjacent ‘salutarem vobis’ (24b) and ‘salutare vobis’ (25b); cf. ‘vobis singulariter prodesse’ (16).

<sup>78</sup> The stages of Theoderic’s hard-fought struggle against Odoacer are discussed by J. Moorhead, *Theoderic in Italy* (1992), 21–8, who also shows the level of senatorial involvement. Andromachus’ mission on Odoacer’s behalf belongs to the opening stages of the conflict.

<sup>79</sup> For Theoderic’s six-month visit to Rome in 500 C.E., see Moorhead, *op. cit.* (n. 78), 60–5.



The reference to Anthemius' arrival also suggests, finally, something of the process which led to the composition of our text, and so returns us to the question of its character and context. The inconvenient counter-argument provided by Anthemius' indulgence will hardly have occurred to Gelasius spontaneously; the point that the last real emperor at Rome had chosen to let the show go on exposes a weak link in his own reasoning, and so had (presumably) been raised by the *patroni*.<sup>80</sup> The observation that a pestilence had followed this, presumably the best rejoinder that he could find, no more than parries this;<sup>81</sup> but it creates an opening for a palpable hit, the point that the Lupercalia was not celebrated in Campania, presumably the place worst affected by the outbreak of disease which had marked its interruption (13). This did not seal the question, but opened up further issues concerning Rome's influence over the provinces (14). The letter thus represents but one round in a quarrel that had already taken some complex turns, and looked set to continue.

This invites us to reconstruct the different levels of argument which lie behind the text. We might infer that after the first breach between Andromachus and Gelasius (whether this was caused by Andromachus' provocative zeal for his task of organizing the festival, or — much more likely — when it became known that the choir was going to serenade the errant presbyter), Gelasius made soundings among his senatorial parishioners, either to negotiate a compromise or else to isolate Andromachus. There is ample evidence for social interactions between the Lateran and the grand but decaying senatorial mansions on the Caelian — Gelasius' predecessor Felix was himself of senatorial stock, and the schism of Laurentius, where the nexus between churchmen and senators would play a key role, was only a decade in the future.<sup>82</sup> However, Gelasius was rebuffed, and came away with a battery of counter-arguments ringing in his ears; perhaps this encouraged Andromachus to publish his edict confirming that the Lupercalia would indeed be held, to maintain a salutary tradition during a dangerous season.<sup>83</sup> And the letter is Gelasius' counter-stroke to this unholy alliance between the blaspheming magistrate and his senatorial sympathizers, a riposte whose cleverness in constructing a position of apparent strength from some decidedly flimsy materials should be acknowledged. It was intended not as the authoritative prohibition that has so often been supposed, but to score points in a round of salon warfare. The ordinary Christians of Rome are studiously ignored, although they will presumably have been the main spectators at the festival; in all his arguments against the *patroni* Gelasius never once accuses them of corrupting their weaker Christian brethren, by exposing them to so monstrous a spectacle. But the pope's failure in the text to deliver any formal condemnation at all against his Lupercalianists (except for Andromachus, disposed of at the outset) must make one wonder whether they were really, after all, the main *intended* readership of his letter. One central message of the text, the robust rejection of Andromachus' right to expose even sinful priests to public humiliation (criminally sinful priests, if 'adulterium' is taken literally), would be of obvious interest to the clergy of Rome; perhaps Gelasius (who could do nothing to stop the event) was writing primarily to advertise his commitment to his most important constituency.

<sup>80</sup> Gelasius feels obliged to return to the point at the end of his text, where he discusses his predecessors' failure to persuade emperors to act. For dealings between Anthemius and Pope Hilarius, see above, n. 73.

<sup>81</sup> The choice of verb ('subrepsit') suggests that there was no obvious connection between Anthemius' endorsement of the festival and any subsequent pestilence; as urban prefect in 468 C.E., Sidonius Apollinaris expresses only routine anxiety about the grain supply (*ep.* 1.10). The reference might be to the consequences of the fighting at Rome between Anthemius and Ricimer in 472 C.E.

<sup>82</sup> Moorhead, *op. cit.* (n. 78), 129–35.

<sup>83</sup> Gelasius' presentation of his case leaves it uncertain whether Andromachus' edict and excommunication were recent developments, rather than a recapitulation for effect of an earlier round in the controversy; the concern shared by the sedentary critics (2) and Andromachus (6–8) over the adulterous priest suggests but does not prove the former.

In any case, once he had said his piece, he had no reason to press the issue. On 15 February the Lupercalia will duly have been held, and Gelasius will duly have turned the traditional blind eye to all those Christians who turned up to watch; at a mutually convenient moment he and Andromachus will have made their peace; and when the next year the Lupercalia came round again, Gelasius will have been far too intelligent to cry wolf a second time. There is instead every reason to suppose that the festival endured for as long as the civil administration of Rome had the means to sponsor such shows. Its endurance should be explained not by popular nostalgia or superstition, nor again by élite condescension or indulgence, but by the returns that members of the Roman aristocracy continued to derive from investing their energies in the city's heritage industry.

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