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Roman Religion

A Sourcebook

Valerie M. Warrior

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Roman Religion A Sourcebook

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RELIGIOUS CELEBRATIONS AND THE CALENDAR

6.1 MACROBIUS, *SATURNALIA* 1.16.2-5. Numa divided the year into months and then each month into days, calling each day either 'festival,' 'working-day,' or 'half-festival.' The festivals are days dedicated to the gods; on the working days people may transact private and public business; and the half-festivals are shared between gods and humans. Thus on festival days there are sacrifices, religious banquets, games and holidays.... On the half-festival days it is lawful (*fas*) to administer justice during certain hours, but not in others. For while the victim is being slain, no legal business may be enacted, but in the interval between the slaying of the victim and the placing of the offering on the altar such business may be enacted. But when the offering is being burned it is not permissible....

The celebration of a religious festival consists of the offering of sacrifices to the gods, or a day that is marked by a ritual feast, or the holding of games in honor of the gods or the observance of holidays. There are four kinds of public holidays: 'fixed,' 'movable,' 'extraordinary,' and 'market days.' All the people participate in the fixed holidays. They are held on fixed days in appointed months which are noted in the calendar, and have fixed observances.... Movable holidays are those which are proclaimed annually by the magistrates or priests, as they see fit....

The official state calendar was a basic institution of Roman religion and, as such, was regulated by the *pontifices*. The sequence of the various religious festivals regulated the timing of business and religious activities throughout the Roman year.

Among the *pontifices'* duties was the charge of keeping the Roman year of 355 days in synchronisation with the seasonal or solar calendar. This they did by intercalation, that is, periodic insertion of an additional month.¹ During

¹ See 2.5 for the institution of intercalation which Livy attributes to Numa.

the political turbulence of the late 50s BCE and the Civil War that followed, however, intercalation was neglected and the Roman calendar year became badly out of synchronisation with the seasons. In 47 BCE Julius Caesar as *pontifex maximus* called on an Egyptian man of science to reform the system by introducing a solar calendar. This Julian calendar is still in use today, albeit with slight modifications introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582.

One of our most important sources for the Roman calendar is Ovid's *Fasti*, although the work is incomplete, dealing only with the first six months of the year. Though obviously a literary rather than a historical work, it is nonetheless a mine of information, as we have already seen in the extracts concerning the Parentalia, Feralia and Lemuria, festivals honoring the dead.² Other sources include calendars inscribed on stone or painted on walls, recording month by month the days on which business could be transacted, courts could sit, and the dates of the chief religious festivals.³

Lupercalia

The Lupercalia was a festival celebrated on 15 February. Although the ancient sources describe the rituals in some detail, they were uncertain about its origins and significance. Plutarch describes some of the peculiar rituals of the festival, giving two explanations of its origin.

6.2 PLUTARCH, ROMULUS 21.3-8. The Lupercalia, as is suggested by the time of its celebration, would seem to be a festival of purification. For it is performed on the inauspicious days⁴ of the month of February (a name that can be explained as meaning 'purificatory')⁵ and in early times they used to call the actual day 'Febrata'. But the name of the festival has a sense equivalent to the Greek wolf-festival (Lycaea)⁶ and thus it seems to be exceedingly ancient, going back to the Arcadians under Evander.⁷ In fact this is the generally accepted meaning of the name, for it can be derived from she-wolf (*lykaina*). Moreover, we see that the *luperci*⁸ begin their circuit of the city from the place where Romulus is said to have been exposed.⁹

² See 3.12 and 3.22.

³ See *BNP* 2.61-77 for examples of calendars from different periods.

⁴ *inauspicious days*: the days marked N (*nefastus*), on which no assembly could meet, nor could a court sit. The festival also coincided with the Parentalia, a festival in honor of the dead.

⁵ *purificatory*: see 6.3.

⁶ *Lycaea*: The Greek word for wolf, *lykos*, is related to the Latin *lupus*.

⁷ *Evander*: is said to have come from Arcadia in Greece and settled on the site of the future Rome.

⁸ *luperci*: the priests who participated in the ritual.

⁹ The *luperci* apparently set out on the circuit of the city from the Lupercal, the cave where the wolf is said to have suckled Romulus and Remus. The exact course traversed by the *luperci* is not known, since the ancient sources are inconsistent in their descriptions.

But what actually happens in the festival makes it hard to guess its origin. For they sacrifice goats; then two boys of noble birth are brought forward. Some touch their foreheads with a bloody knife, and others immediately wipe off the blood with wool soaked in milk. After their foreheads are wiped, the boys must laugh. Next they cut the goat skins into strips and run about naked but for a belt around their waist, striking anyone in their path with the thongs. And women of childbearing age do not try to avoid the blows, believing that they promote fertility and easy childbirth. A distinctive feature of the festival is that the *luperci* also sacrifice a dog.

A certain Butas,¹⁰ who wrote mythical explanations of Roman customs in elegiac verse, says that the followers of Romulus, once they had defeated Amulius,¹¹ raced joyfully to the spot where the she-wolf suckled the twins when they were babies; that the festival is conducted as an imitation of their race, and that the boys of noble family run:

Striking all whom they meet,
as long ago
Romulus and Remus from Alba ran,
brandishing their swords.

And he suggests that the bloody sword is applied to their foreheads as a symbol of the slaughter and danger of that time; and the cleansing with milk is a reminder of the nourishing of the twins. Gaius Acilius,¹² on the other hand, writes that before the foundation of the city the flocks of Romulus and his companions disappeared; they prayed to Faunus¹³ and then ran off to find them, naked so that they should not be bothered by sweat. And this, he suggests, is why the *luperci* run around naked. As for the dog, one might say (if it really is a purificatory sacrifice) that it is sacrificed as a means of purification.... But if they perform these rites as a thank-offering to the she-wolf for saving and nourishing Romulus, it is not without reason that a dog is sacrificed, for the dog is the enemy of wolves. Unless, of course, the animal is being punished for annoying the *luperci* when they run their course.

The Lupercalia fell within the period of the Parentalia (13-22 February), the major festival of the dead in the Roman calendar.¹⁴ Thus it is not surprising to find the antiquarian Varro, in his comments on the derivation of the name 'February,' suggesting that the Lupercalia is to be seen in the context of the underworld and the spirits of the dead.

¹⁰ *Butas*: a Greek poet whose work has not survived.

¹¹ *Amulius*: the usurper who had deposed his brother Numitor, the grandfather of Romulus and Remus, and who exposed the twins.

¹² *Gaius Acilius*: a Roman historian of the second century BCE whose work only survives in fragments quoted by other writers.

¹³ *Faunus*: an Italic deity of the countryside, often identified with the Greek god Pan.

¹⁴ *Parentalia*: see 3.23.

6.3 VARRO, ON THE LATIN LANGUAGE 6.34. Two months were added to these:¹⁵ the first was called January (*Januarius*) after the god who comes first in order.¹⁶ The second, as the same writers say, is called February (*Februarius*) after the gods of the underworld (*di inferi*) because these deities are offered sacrifice at this time of year. I prefer to think that February derives from the Day of Purification (*dies februatus*) because the people are purified (*februatur*) on that day – that is, the naked *luperci* go round the ancient Palatine city, which is surrounded by human flocks.¹⁷

Mark Antony, participating as a priest (*lupercus*) at the Lupercalia in 44 BCE, offers Julius Caesar a diadem, shortly before the latter's assassination.¹⁸

6.4 PLUTARCH, CAESAR 61.3-4. Caesar was watching these ceremonies, seated on the Rostra on a golden throne, dressed in triumphal garb.¹⁹ Antony was one of the runners of the sacred race and he was also consul. He rushed into the Forum, and the crowd parted to make way for him. He was carrying a diadem entwined with a wreath of laurel and offered it to Caesar. There was some applause, not very outstanding, but sparse and contrived. But when Caesar pushed the diadem away, the whole people applauded. Just a few applauded when Antony offered it a second time, but everyone applauded when Caesar refused it. So the experiment failed, and Caesar rose and ordered the wreath to be taken to the Capitoline temple.

Megalesia

This festival began on 4 April and was celebrated in honor of the Magna Mater, the Great Mother goddess who was also known as Cybele.²⁰ Cicero reminds his audience about the religious origin of the Megalesian games, noting that the goddess herself was a spectator at these games.

6.5 CICERO, ON THE REPLY OF THE HARUSPICES 24. What am I to say about those games that our ancestors wished to be held and celebrated on the Palatine in front of her temple and in the very sight of the goddess.

Ovid, in describing the opening procession of the Megalesia, refers to the staging of plays as part of the games.²¹

¹⁵ *added to these*: the original ten months of the Roman year were March to December.

¹⁶ *comes first in order*: Janus is invoked first, even before Jupiter, in the *devotio* of Decius Mus; see 4.18.

¹⁷ *human flocks*: it has been plausibly suggested that, rather than referring to the mobbing of the *luperci* by human beings, this refers to flocks of ghosts who were prevalent in the city during February; see Michels (1953) 35-59.

¹⁸ *diadem*: this was a symbol of monarchy, a concept that was totally incompatible with the traditions of the Roman republic.

¹⁹ *Rostra*: the Speakers' Platform in the Roman Forum.

²⁰ On the bringing of this foreign goddess to Rome, see 8.15-8.18.

²¹ In the early second century the plays of Plautus and Terence were performed at the Megalesia; see 10.4 and 10.5.

6.6 OVID, FASTI 4.179-190. Let the sky revolve three times on its never-resting axis, and let Titan three times yoke and three times unyoke his horses.²² Then immediately the Berecyntian flute will blow on its bent horn and it will be the festival of the Idaean mother.²³ Eunuchs will march and beat their hollow drums, and cymbals clashed on cymbals will ring forth.²⁴ The goddess herself, seated on the unmanly necks of her attendants, will be borne through the city streets amidst howls. The stage is clattering, the games are summoning. Go watch the games, citizens of Rome, and let the squabbling law-courts be free of their customary battle-strife.²⁵ I have many questions to ask, but I am terrified by the sound of clashing brass and the bent flute with its scary sound.

Parilia

This festival was celebrated on 21 April in honor of Pales, god of flocks and herds, and also marked the birthday of Rome. The problem is: does this duality represent a progression from pastoral to political, or are the two aspects to be regarded as synchronous?²⁶

Varro and Plutarch report the tradition connecting the founding of Rome on the Parilia with Rome's pastoral origins:

6.7 VARRO, ON AGRICULTURE 2.1.9. Who indeed denies that the Roman people are descended from shepherds? Who does not know that it was a shepherd Faustulus who reared and educated Romulus and Remus? Will not the fact that they chose the Parilia as the time to found a city indicate that these men were indeed shepherds?

6.8 PLUTARCH, ROMULUS 12.1. It is generally agreed that the foundation of the city took place on 21 April. The Romans celebrate this day with a festival, which they call the birthday of their country. In the beginning, so it is said, they sacrificed no living creature – but thought they should keep the festival pure and bloodless since it commemorated the birthday of their country. However, even before the city's foundation, they had a herdsman's festival on that day and they called it the 'Parilia.'

Ovid describes some of the rituals at the Parilia, asserting that he himself has participated in these rites.

6.9 OVID, FASTI 4.721-746, 777-806. Night has passed and Dawn is appearing. I am called on to sing of the Parilia. Nor is my calling in vain, if kindly Pales grants her favor.²⁷ Kindly Pales, favor me as I sing of pastoral rites, if I honor

²² *Titan*: the sun

²³ *Berecyntian*: epithet regularly used of the goddess to denote her Phrygian origin. *Idaean*: from Mount Ida near Troy, where the goddess Cybele was worshipped and, according to Ovid, was brought to Rome; see 8.17.

²⁴ The priests of the Magna Mater were eunuchs.

²⁵ *free... battle strife*: this day was free for public meetings and assemblies, but closed to suits in the praetor's court.

²⁶ See BNP 2.117 with bibliography.

²⁷ *Pales* is here addressed as a goddess, although elsewhere the deity is regarded as male. Compare the ambiguity concerning the gender of Robigo, in 6.10 and 6.11.

your benefactions with my service. Be assured that I have often brought with full hands the ashes of a calf and the bean stalks, the burnt means of purification.²⁸ Be assured that I have leaped over the flames, arranged three in a row, and the moist laurel branch has sprinkled drops of water over me. The goddess is moved and grants her favor to my work. My ship leaves the dock, and already my sails have fair winds.

Go, people, and bring from the virgin's altar the material for purification. Vesta will give them, and by Vesta's gift you will be pure. The material will be the blood of a horse and the ashes of a calf;²⁹ the third thing will be the empty stalk of a hard bean. Shepherd, purify your well-fed sheep as dusk first falls. First sprinkle the ground with water and sweep it with a broom. Decorate the sheepfold with leaves and branches fastened on it. Adorn the entrance and cover it with a long garland. Make blue smoke from pure sulphur, and let the sheep bleat when she is touched by the smoking sulphur. Burn rosemary, pine and juniper, and let the laurel crackle as it sings in the middle of the hearth. Put a basket of millet with the cakes of millet; the country goddess takes particular delight in this food. Add her favorite meat and a pail of milk, and when the meat is cut up, pray to wood-dwelling Pales with an offering of warm milk...

[There follows a long prayer, asking pardon for inadvertent past offences, and seeking future benefits.]

This is how the goddess is to be propitiated. Face the east and pronounce the above prayer four times, washing your hands in living dew. Then you should set down a wooden bowl as if it were a mixing bowl, and drink the snow-white milk and the purple new wine. Next with swift foot you should energetically leap through the burning heaps of crackling straw.

I have described the custom; it remains for me to relate its origin. The multitude of explanations makes me doubtful and holds back my project at the outset. Devouring fire purges all things and burns out the impurities of metals: therefore it purges the sheep as well as their shepherd. Or is it because two discordant deities, fire and water, are two opposing principles from which everything is composed? And so our ancestors joined these elements, thinking that it was appropriate to touch the body with fire and sprinkled water. Or is it because the origin of life is contained in these elements that the exile is deprived of them and by them the bride is made a wife.³⁰

²⁸ *burnt means of purification*: the Vestals had prepared this material by ritually burning and mixing it; see Fantham (1998) 229.

²⁹ *blood of a horse*: this would have been the October horse, the trace-horse of the winning chariot in a race held on 15 October. After the race, this horse was sacrificed and its blood preserved for the Parilia.

³⁰ An exile was formally debarred from fire and water, and a new bride was presented with these two elements when she entered her new home.

Some suppose (though I can hardly do so) that the allusion is to Phaethon and to Deucalion's flood.³¹ Some also say that a spark suddenly leaped out when the shepherds were striking rock upon rock. The first spark perished, but the second was caught in straw. Is this the reason for the flame at the Parilia? Or does this custom derive from the piety of Aeneas to whom fire gave a safe passage even in his defeat? Or is it nearer the truth that, when Rome was founded, orders were given to transfer their household gods (Lares) to new homes and that in changing their abode, the farmers set fire to their dwellings in the fields and the huts they were about to leave, and they and their cattle too leaped through the flames? This is the practice that continues even now on your birthday, Rome.³²

Robigalia³³

This festival in honor of Robigo or Robigus, the spirit of blight, mildew or rust (both masculine and feminine forms appear in our sources) was celebrated on 25 April. At the beginning of his work *On Agriculture*, the antiquarian Varro invokes the special patron deities of farmers; the fourth such pair he calls on are Robigus and Flora.³⁴

6.10 VARRO, *ON AGRICULTURE* 1.1.6. For when they are propitious, mildew will not harm the grain and the trees; thus in honor of Robigus, the state festival of the Robigalia has been instituted, and in honor of Flora, the games called Floralia.

Ovid describes the rituals and prayers used in the apotropaic worship of Robigo.

6.11 OVID, *FASTI* 4.905-942. On the dawn of that day [25 April], when I was returning from Nomentum to Rome, a white-robed crowd blocked the middle of the road. A *flamen* was on his way to the grove of ancient Robigo, to throw the entrails of a dog into the flames and also the entrails of a sheep. Immediately I went up to him to learn of the rite. Your *flamen*, Quirinus, uttered the following words: 'Scaly Robigo, may you spare the sprouting corn, and let the smooth top quiver on the surface of the ground. Let the crops grow, nourished by the propitious constellations of the heavens, until they are ready for the sickle. Your power is considerable: the grain on which you have made your mark the farmer sadly counts as lost. Neither winds nor rain nor glistening frost that nips and pales the grain harm it as much as when the sun warms the wet stalks.'

³¹ *Phaethon*: son of Helios, the Sun, who attempted to drive his father's chariot, was unable to control it and would have set the world on fire had not Zeus intervened with a thunderbolt and killed him.

Deucalion: a Greek mythical figure who, like Noah, built an ark in order to survive a flood. Ovid explicitly rejects Greek myths as an explanation for the rites of the Parilia.

³² Ovid then proceeds to describe the taking of auspices by Romulus and Remus; see 2.2.

³³ As Fantham (1998) 264-265 notes, Ovid incorrectly assigns the rising of the Dog Star to late April rather than high summer.

³⁴ The *Floralia* was held from 28 April to 3 May.

Then, fearful goddess, is the time for your anger. Spare, I pray, and take your scabby hands from the harvest and do not harm our fields of grain. It is enough that you have the power to harm. Do not embrace the tender crops, but rather embrace hardy iron. First destroy what can destroy others. Better that you pick on swords and harmful weapons. There is no need of them: the world is at peace. Now let hoes, the hardy two-pronged mattock, and the curved plough-share, the wealth of the countryside, shine brightly. But let rust defile arms, and let anyone who tries to draw his sword from its scabbard feel it stick from long disuse. But do not defile the grain, and may the farmer always be able to pay vows to you in your absence.³⁵

These were his words. From his right hand hung a napkin with a loose nap, and he had a box of incense together with a bowl of wine. The incense and wine, and the entrails of a two-year old sheep and the foul guts of a filthy dog he placed on the hearth – we saw him do this. Then he said to me, ‘You ask why an unusual victim is assigned to this rite?’ For I had asked this question. ‘Learn the reason,’ the *flamen* said, ‘It is the Dog (they call it the Icarian dog)³⁶ and when that constellation rises the earth is parched and dry, and the crop ripens prematurely. This dog is put on the altar in place of the Dog Star; there is no reason for killing him other than the name.’

Floralia

As the Robigalia was intended to avert destruction from the developing crops, so the Floralia was celebrated to ensure the successful setting of the grain, the fruit of plants, orchards, olives and vines. The festival extended from 28 April to 3 May, was first instituted in 238 BCE, and made annual in 177 BCE.

Ovid introduces the festival in his calendar notice for 28 April, but defers a full discussion until the month of May.

6.12 OVID, *FASTI* 4.943-947. When the wife of Tithonus has left the brother of Phrygian Assaracus and has three times lifted her radiant light in the bright firmament, there comes a goddess decked with garlands of a thousand different kinds of flowers, and the stage enjoys the customary licence of jollity.³⁷ The rites of Flora also extend into the beginning of May.

Ovid calls on the goddess to describe who she is.

6.13 OVID, *FASTI* 5.183-192. Come, Mother of flowers, that we may honor you with fun and games! Last month I postponed giving you your due. You begin in April and cross into the time of May, the one month has you as it flees, the other as it comes. Since the borders of the months are yours and yield to you,

³⁵ The more usual prayer is for the presence, not the absence, of a deity.

³⁶ *Icarian dog*: the dog Maera who discovered the body of his master Icarus and was subsequently transformed into a star.

wife of Tithonus: Aurora, or Dawn. Tithonus is connected with Aeneas, since he is identified as the brother of Anchises, Aeneas' father.

³⁷ At the Floralia there were stage performances of mimes, a bawdy kind of musical comedy.

either of the two is fitting for your praises. The games of the Circus and the victor's palm fall into this month; let my poem also run side by side with these games in the Circus. Tell me goddess, who you are....

The goddess describes some of her functions.

6.14 OVID, *FASTI* 5.261-272. Perhaps you may think that my sole realm is dainty garlands. My divinity also touches the tilled fields. If the crops have blossomed well, the threshing floor will be rich. If the vines have blossomed well, there will be wine. If the olives have blossomed well, it will be a brilliant year, and the fruits will have a successful harvest. If once the blossom is damaged, the vetch and beans perish, likewise, foreign Nile, your lentils perish. Wines also flourish, laboriously stored in mighty cellars, and a scum covers the surface at the top of the jars. Honey is my gift. I summon to the violet, clover and grey thyme the winged creatures to produce their honey.

The goddess tells how her games came to be made annual.

6.15 OVID, *FASTI* 5.312-330. I myself was once neglected by the Senate. What was I to do? How could I make clear my resentment? What punishment could I exact for this censure? In my sadness, I did not perform my duties. I did not protect the countryside, nor did I concern myself with fertility of the gardens. The lilies had fallen. You could see the violets were parched, and the tendrils of the crimson saffron languishing. Often the west wind said to me, ‘Don't spoil your own dowry.’ But my dowry was worthless to me. The olives were blossoming; violent winds blighted them. The crops were blooming; the crop was damaged by hail. The vines were promising, the sky grew black under the south wind, and a sudden shower shook down the leaves. I did not want this to happen, nor am I cruel in my anger, but I did not care to ward off any of this. The Senate met, and vowed that if the year should prove fruitful, my festival would be made annual. I consented to the vow. The consuls Laenas and Postumius celebrated the games that had been vowed to me.³⁸

Ovid reflects on the jocular nature of the games and the goddess' appeal to the masses and to prostitutes.

6.16 OVID, *FASTI* 5.331-354. I was trying to ask why these games are marked by a greater wantonness and a freer spirit of fun and games, but it occurred to me that the deity is not strait-laced, and that the goddess' gifts lend themselves to delights. The brows of drinking party-goers are wreathed with stitched garlands, and the polished table lies hidden under a shower of roses. The drunken guest dances, his hair crowned with bark from the linden tree and, uninhibited, he enjoys the pleasure of unmixed wine. Drunk, the lover sings at the hard threshold of his lovely girl-friend, his perfumed hair crowned with soft garlands. No serious business is done by the one whose brow is garlanded, no clear water is drunk by those who bind their hair with flowers....

The levity of the stage well befits Flora. She is not, believe me, to be counted among your goddesses of tragedy. The reason why a crowd of prostitutes celebrate these games is not hard to discover. She is not one of your gloomy

³⁸ Consuls in 173 BCE.

or highfalutin types. She wants to open her rites to the plebeian throngs. She warns us to enjoy the splendor of age while it still blooms. For the thorn, she reminds us, is despised when the roses have fallen.

Saturnalia

This festival in honor of Saturn began on 17 December, extending by the late republic to 23 December. Saturn is thought by some scholars to be the god of sowing or of seed-corn, others consider him to be of Etruscan origin. A third possibility is that he is a Roman-Italic god. A major problem is that he was worshipped according to the Greek rite, that is, with the head uncovered. He is also assimilated to the Greek Kronos, which might account for the Greek rite.

His temple in the Roman Forum is said to date to the early republic; it contained a statue of the god which was bound with woollen bonds that were only released on the festal day, a ritual that has led some to regard him as a god of liberation. The poet Catullus (14.15) describes the Saturnalia as the 'best of days.' Coming near the time of the winter solstice, it was a period of rest, merry-making, gift-giving and also a reversal of social roles. Even the stern and parsimonious Cato the Elder relaxed and gave his dependents an additional measure of wine.

Religious festivals were frequently an opportunity for licence as well as festivity. Nowhere is this better seen than in the Saturnalia, when the social rules and hierarchies were not only suspended but also disrupted and even inverted. Macrobius quotes Accius, an early Latin poet of the second century BCE, as saying that masters waited on their own slaves at this feast.

6.17 MACROBIUS, *SATURNALIA* 1.7.37. They celebrate the day, and almost everyone joyfully holds feasts throughout the countryside and towns, with each man waiting upon his own slaves.

Macrobius interrupts the dialogue of his *Saturnalia* (the setting of which was this particular festival) to announce the slaves' dinner party.

6.18 MACROBIUS, *SATURNALIA* 1.24.22-23. Meanwhile the head of the slave household, whose responsibility it was to offer sacrifice to the Penates, to manage the provisions and to direct the activities of the domestic servants, advised his master that the household had dined in accordance with the annual ritual custom. For at this festival houses that observe the proper religious customs first of all honor the slaves with a dinner prepared as if for the master; and only afterwards is the table again prepared for the head of the household. So, then, the man in charge of the household slaves intervened to announce the time of dinner and summon the masters to table.

Livy reports the institution of a permanent annual festival to Saturn as one of the measures taken at the beginning of 217 BCE, the year of the Roman defeat at Trasimene.³⁹

³⁹ The festival had probably been long established; the innovation was probably the public feast prepared by the senators.

6.19 LIVY 22.1.19-20. Finally, for it was now December, victims were slain at the temple of Saturn in Rome and a *lectisternium* was ordered (the couch was set out by the senators) and also a public feast. Throughout the city for a day and a night the cry 'Saturnalia' was maintained and the people were ordered to hold it a sacred day and to keep it in perpetuity.

But not everyone wanted to join in the festivities. Much later Pliny the Younger describes how he retreats from his house at the time of the Saturnalia.⁴⁰

6.20 PLINY, *LETTERS* 2.17. When I retreat to this garden-apartment, I seem to be far from my own house, and I take particular pleasure in it at the time of the Saturnalia, when the rest of the house resounds with shouts of festivity because of the licence of that season. Thus I neither interrupt their festivities, nor they my studies.

The poet Statius (late first century BCE) proclaims that the festival will be as long-lived as Rome.

6.21 STATIUS, *SILVAE* 1.6.98. Time shall not destroy that sacred day, so long as the hills of Latium endure and father Tiber, while your city and the Capitol remain.

⁴⁰ See 13.18 for the advice of the Stoic philosopher, Seneca the Younger, on dealing with the Saturnalia.