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Lua Mater: Fire, Rust, and War in Early Roman Cult

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absurd. Friction of wood against iron will fire the wood, as is seen in the occasional firing of a brake-block on a railway waggon, but only at an expenditure of energy far greater than any unaided man can produce, or even one aided with a hand-drill.

Sometimes, instead of being revolved, the borer, still pointed, is rubbed to and fro in a groove in the fire-block, which makes Mr. Agar's conjecture of ἐνιάλλε στρογγή possible. The process is difficult, and I have never succeeded myself either with or without a drill; making fire with a flint and steel is quite easy if the tinder be dry. With the fire-stick, unless just the right pressure be used, failure results; if too much pressure be used the fire-block merely polishes and no dust is formed; if too little, again no dust is formed nor any heat. I have often managed to get the wood hot and to smoke, but nothing like as hot as I got myself. I should add that modern man will find it easier to hold the fire block in a vice, and not with the feet.

I imagine that the difficulty of making fire before the use of the flint and steel was the origin of such regulations as those concerning the fire of Vestā, and of such a simile as that in *Od.* V. 488 ff.

As an old Etonian, I may perhaps be pardoned if I add that the facts which I have cited remind me of a famous cricket ground—namely, Agar's Plough. H. P. CHOLMELEY.

LUA MATER: FIRE, RUST, AND WAR IN EARLY ROMAN CULT.

ONE of the obscurest and most puzzling figures in the Roman pantheon is Lua Mater. This paper is an attempt to clear up some of the problems connected with her and with certain other deities who seem to me to form part of the same very early circle of ideas.

Very little is definitely stated about her by the ancients.¹ She is invoked with Saturn (Lua Saturni, in the *comprecationes* in Gellius XIII. 23, 2). She is one of the deities to whom arms taken from the enemy may be burned (*Liv.* XLV. 33, 1, cf. VIII. 1, 6). Her name is probably connected with *lues*.² There are no inscriptions in her honour, and no record of any sacrifices to her, other than the burning of arms.

A plausible conjecture introduces her, it is true, into the following passage from the inter-

polator of Servius on *Aen.* III. 139: ARBORIBVSQVE SATISQVE LVES—quidam dicunt diuersis numinibus uel bene uel male faciendi potestatem dicatam, ut . . . Iunoni procreationem liberorum, sterilitatem horum tam Saturno quam Lunae; hanc enim sicut Saturnum orbandi potestatem habere. For *Lunae*, Preller would read *Luae*, and Wissowa agrees. But (1) the gloss is very confused, for it sets out to show that the same deity can both bless and ban, as Apollo in Vergil's text, though god of leechcraft, sends a plague, and goes on to say that different deities, acting in pairs, send blessing and curse respectively. (2) The text will make sense without emendation. An astrological reference will surprise no one who knows the commentators on Vergil, and Luna is connected with *orbitas* (see e.g. Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* VI. 29, 3, to take the first passage that comes to hand). That the functions of the gods were in later times closely bound up with the supposed influences of those heavenly bodies which bore their names is well known. I prefer, therefore, to leave this passage on one side, remarking only that if Preller's emendation be accepted it merely strengthens the proof of the unpleasant nature of Lua, which is apparent enough from her name (as Wissowa sees, *l.c.* and RKR², p. 208).

We are left, then, with a deity connected (1) with sowing, or the god of sowing; (2) with plague; (3) with burning. What functions can she have to include these three discrete spheres of activity?

I hold in the first place that we shall handicap ourselves needlessly if we think of her too closely in connection with Saturnus. Connected with him, indeed, she must be in some way, or no official prayer would mention them together; but looking at the list in Gellius, I think we can find some evidence that these pairings of deities are rather of the nature of differentiating titles than of expressions of permanent relationship. For what does the genitive case here mean? Certainly not kinship; Lua is not wife or daughter of Saturnus, for Italian numina have no such relationships. Some sort of subordination then is most naturally to be assumed, but is it permanent or temporary? Is Lua who is subordinated to Saturn the only indigitation of Lua? Not necessarily, for the list (supplemented by Fest. epit. 100 M/71 Th.) shows us on the one hand Herie Iunonis, on the other Here Martia, in whom it is at least plausible to recognise two forms of the same name, related probably to the Oscan

¹ See Wissowa in Roscher's *Lexikon* II. 2146.

² v. Domaschewski (*Abhandlungen zur röm. Rel.* p. 109 and n.3) denies this, and declares that she is an 'Eigenschaftsgöttin des Saturnus . . . und zwar . . . jene Eigenschaft, die das Keimen der Saaten befördert,' but he gives no proof, etymological or other.

Herentas, and signifying the will or wish of Mars and of Iuno respectively (cf. Osc. *herest*, uolet). And as for Lua we find her associated with Mars in a context (Liv. II. cc.) from which Saturnus is wholly excluded. We may then reasonably hold that the pairings of deities quoted by Gellius no more preclude the possibility of those same deities appearing in other partnerships than the existence of Zeus Heraios proves him permanently subject to Hera, or the indigitation of Apollo as *medicus* and *paean* (Macr. Sat. I. xvii. 15) forbids us to believe that he was worshipped under other titles also. Lua Saturni is simply Lua, who on this occasion is worshipped in conjunction with Saturnus.

It remains, then, to consider her name and her warlike functions, and to try to explain them in a way which will leave room for her occasional association with the spirit of sowing. In the first place, *lues* is as vague a word as 'plague' in English. It is used of blight on trees and plants in the passage of Vergil just quoted, while elsewhere it may signify a disease attacking men. Here we want a plague or destruction which might attack seeds, and at the same time is connected with war and burning. One naturally thinks of fire.

That Lua is actually a fire-goddess is not likely. It is not she, but Maia and later Stata Mater, who are named in the cult of Volcanus. The latter has apparently no connection at all with Saturnus, and in the passages which mention the burning of arms in his honour (Liv. I. 37, 5; XXIII. 46, 5; XXX. 6, 9) Lua does not appear. But it is noteworthy that for a fire-god to be connected with an agricultural deity is by no means unexampled. Maia herself is the goddess of growth or increase, to judge by her name, and her month is that in which the early summer vegetation is growing. Vesta again is connected, or at least the Vestal Virgins are, with agricultural rites—the spelt harvest in May, the ritual of the Argei, the Fordicidia, the Ecus October. But with Mars Lua seems to have a two-fold connection, viz.: (1) that the deities to whom arms may be sacrificed are, in Livy XLV. 38, 1, Mars, 'Minerua'

(i.e., Nerio)¹ and Lua, and (2) that the Arval Brothers pray (Henzen, p. cciv.), *neue luerue Marmar sins incurrere in pleores*, where, although *luerue* as it stands can hardly be right, it is more natural to take it as concealing some cognate of *lues* that, with Bücheler, to emend it away. And whatever we may think of the origin of Mars, it cannot be doubted that he had agricultural functions, indeed that he is connected in some manner with sowing, for in this very hymn he is invoked almost in the same breath with the Semunes.

Not only Mars but Quirinus was interested in agriculture. His flamen, besides his frequent appearance by the side of the Vestals, sacrifices to Acca Larentia (Gell. VII. 7), to Consus on the Consualia (Tert. *de spect.* 5), and, most important of all, to Robigus. In this last connection I would protest against the suggestion of Wissowa, *op. cit.* p. 155, that he acted merely because his regular functions took up so little time. If this was so, why was not some other unemployed priest, say the fl. Pomonalis or Falacer, called upon to do the work? Our only authority, Ovid (*Fasti* IV. 110), gives no hint that the presence of the flamen Quirinalis was not absolutely necessary, or that anyone else could have acted in his place. I would rather suppose some connection of Quirinus² with this curious ritual, whose most interesting feature is the sacrifice of a dog. That this is the result of a sort of bad pun on the name of the dog-star, as Ovid *l.c.* supposes, is indeed rightly denied by modern critics; nor is the *augurium caninum* otherwise connected with Sirius than by date, I think. From the fact that the victim at the *augurium* was a red dog, it seems to me a likely guess that Robigus' dog was red also, the colour of the dreaded 'rust.'

¹ Minerua is not an *indiges*, and so is out of place here. But cf. Appian, *Punica* 133, which, following Polybios no doubt, names Athena. Livy obviously draws upon the same author in the above passage, and we may rectify the mistake by supposing that Polybios explained Nerio by Athena, in the latter's capacity as a war-goddess. Cf. Wissowa, *RKR*³, pp. 148, 208.

² Tert., *l.c.*, mentions Mars in this connection; *Numa Pompilius Marti et Robigini fecit*; but this is, apparently, a mere slip.

Departing a little from the main argument of this paper, I would here offer a suggestion as to the real meaning of this rite. We are familiar enough with corn-spirits in animal form, thanks to Mannhardt and Fraser. I believe that we have here a bad corn-spirit, one who destroys corn instead of making it grow, and is killed in order to get rid of him, not to let him transmigrate into a new and more vigorous body. The old corn-spirit is killed when his work is done and his incarnation, the ripe ears, may no longer stand; but Robigus in his dog-avatar is killed early in the year, in April, some time before the sacred spelt-harvest of the Vestals, to prevent him damaging the crop at all. So at Carseoli something—Ovid's corrupt text does not enable us to say exactly what—was done to another avatar of the red mildew, the fox (*Fast.* IV. 711); apparently the beast was burned to death. The conception of an evil power as something which could be killed, and so got finally rid of, in some incarnate form, was not strange to ancient magic; Apollonios of Tyana had a plague-demon stoned in the shape of an old man (*Philostr. Vita Apoll.* IV. 10). *Pax deorum* was indeed what the Roman craved, humbly enough, in the case of such mighty ones as Iuppiter and Quirinus; but in the case of one or two obnoxious demons it would appear to have been allowable to assail them *iusto pioque bello*. Later, when the idea of sacrifice as the giving of food to the gods swamped all other conceptions,¹ the respectable sheep was added, and the *exta* of the dog presented like those of a more normal victim; and long before that, it may well be, Quirinus was called in to lend his aid.

I have said that the dog-star had little or nothing to do with dog-sacrifice, or the killing of dog-demons; yet I think Ovid's fancy contains, if only by

accident, a hint of the truth. He clearly associates rust with hot weather, and rightly enough in a way, though presumably neither that or any other fungus would prosper unless the atmosphere were also damp. The line of reasoning is this, I think: fire is hot and red (long after Robigus was forgotten, Giotto was indicating fire in his frescoes by a neat patch of red paint); rust is red (at least its spores are) and comes in hot weather; therefore rust is a kind of fire, and the red dog (we still speak of red cattle, meaning a warm brown colour) is fire-colour or rust-colour.

We can now, I think, find a place for a deity who is connected with seeds and yet with fire; Lua, the spirit of *lues*, can, among other things, blight the precious seed-corn, if she be not propitiated.

I would call attention in this connection to the loose use of the verb *urere*. If a crop, such as flax or poppies, which exhausts the soil, can be said to 'burn' it (*Virg. Georg.* I. 78), there is no need even to be particular to assign Lua's evil activities to some sphere in which a firey-coloured fungus is involved.

But there is yet another and more literal kind of fire which can on occasion damage crops and much else. *Ferro atque igne uastare* was a commonplace of ancient warfare, horribly revived in our own day. We have, indeed, no proof that Lua was called in to help with her 'fire' in the destruction of such of the enemy's seed-corn as escaped the material activities of the army, but it is not unlikely, since we have already seen her busy in connection with another piece of war-magic, the 'sacrifice' of the arms. For that it was simply war-magic I am fairly convinced. If the arms were a present to the god, why were they not put in a temple? To burn food before a god is a different matter, for to the average Roman, or Greek, of periods whereof we have any record, the notion clearly was that the deities lived on the smoke or steam of the sacrifices. But in the case of captured arms, the motive seems rather to be the destruction by sympathetic magic of the other arms which are still

¹ Much harm has been done by scholars in trying to force all kinds of sacrifice into one formula, whether gift, communal meal, god-eating, or simple magical rite. All these interpretations have their value, and I doubt if we can say that one is more primitive than another. For the world in general certainly, for many individual peoples probably, several causes have been at work.

in possession of the enemy.¹ As to the gods invoked, Volcanus is clearly at home in an act involving destruction by fire; Mars and Nerio are equally appropriate, that their greater potency may reinforce the spell; while Lua, who by reason of her 'burning' of the corn, or, if I am right, of its seeds, is perhaps called in as a sort of fire-goddess.

But in considering any Roman rite, we should always keep in view the maxim, *ὁ τρόπος καὶ ἰάσεται*. As Geneta Mana is the goddess of birth and also of death; as Ianus is Patulcius Clusius, and so on, we may expect a god who can destroy by fire to help by fire also. One way of helping is clearly to burn up what is harmful. Thus we see Volcanus connected with the Tubilustrum, not, as Ovid imagines, because the trumpets are made by his art,² for he seems never to have been a god of smiths, but by the purifying virtues of his element. Compare also the purifying fires of the Parilia, the familiar torches of many ceremonies, such as marriage, and the purgatorial fires of many faiths, including that of Vergil. This may be wholly negative—there is something altogether bad, which we want taken away, and so we burn it. But that it is positive also is an idea not lightly to be dismissed. The most terrible of fires, the thunderbolt, may not only destroy but also confer deity.³ It is from a funeral pyre that Herakles mounts to heaven; Empedokles and Peregrinus alike⁴ sought immortality by the same route. Demeter at Eleusis and Isis at Byblos place in the fire the children on whom they wish to confer immortality; Thetis does the same,⁵ while Medeia uses the closely allied method of a boiling cauldron. I have already mentioned the activity of the Vestals in agricultural rites. Possibly a subsidiary cause of the connection of fire and agriculture may have been the

utility, well understood by the ancients, of ashes as manure.⁶ And, to return to Robigus for a moment, whether my suggestion of the real significance of the sacrifice be right or wrong, this connection of war, fire, and agriculture, may help us to understand why the fl. Quirinalis in particular was chosen to perform the rite. Fire here drives out fire, the clean and beneficent fire of the warlike and agricultural deity fighting the impure flames of the hurtful daimon. We may, then, fairly suppose that Lua had a good side as well as a bad one in her activities (possibly, if we knew a little more about her, we might find some title suggesting it).

To sum up, we find Lua belonging to a group of deities whose functions, fairly distinct but often interlocking, concern the closely connected group of human activities—war, agriculture, and the use of fire; her functions appear to have been normally maleficent, but not necessarily or invariably so; and therefore we find her in the honourable company of Saturnus and Mars, propitiated and asked for help as they are, and not, as apparently Robigus was, attacked.

H. J. ROSE.

⁶ Virg. *Georg.* I. 80.

AESCHYLUS, PROMETHEUS VINCTUS 801.

τοιοῦτο μὲν σοι τοῦτο φρούριον λέγω.

The Scholia on this passage, and Hesychius, explain φρούριον as 'a danger to guard against' (Hesychius, φρούριον · προφύλαγμα). As there is no other instance of this meaning, modern editors accept the explanation with some doubt, suggesting as an alternative the 'ordinary meaning' of 'guard' or 'garrison' (so Sikes and Wilson's commentary). But 'guard-post' (so Rackham) is nearer to the original meaning of 'fort' or 'citadel'—here, the region held by the Gorgons and Graiai. This rendering finds some support in Cicero's version (*Quaest. Tusc.* ii. 10) of a fragment from the Πρωμηθεὺς Λυόμενος.

1. 9. Transverberatus castrum hoc Furiarum incolo.

Welcklein—who accepts Hesychius' explanation of φρούριον—here annotates castrum as follows: 'etwa Ἐρινύων φρουράν nach, l. 143. Ἐρινύων ist dann metonymisch gebraucht ("Lager der Rache").' But φρουρά in the sense of *P. V.*, line 143, φρουράν ἀγέλην ὀχέσω, is not an exact equivalent to either 'castrum' or 'Lager,' and φρούριον [Γοργόνων] is a nearer parallel to 'castrum Furiarum.'

MARGARET E. HIRST.

¹ For a not dissimilar idea, see Plut. *quaest. Rom.* 37, and Jevons' introduction to his edition of Philemon Holland's translation, p. lxxxi.

² *Fast.* V. 726.

³ Diod. Sic. V. 52, 2.

⁴ Horace *A. P.* 465; Luc. *de mort. Peregr.* 29.

⁵ Hom. *Hymn. in Cer.* 239 ff.; Plut. *de Is. et Os.* 357 c; Lykophron 178-9. Cf. Dussaud, *Intr. à l'Hist. des Rél.*, p. 179.