AN ENIGMATIC FUNCTION
OF THE FLAMEN DIALIS (Ovid, Fast., 2.282)
AND THE AUGUSTAN REFORM

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Ovid's treatment of the Lupercalia — Fast. 2.267-452 — is certainly our primary source on this much debated Roman festival, which with regard to its origin, its meaning, and its ritual details, is still far from being clear. Lastly K. W. Welwei has discussed the many controversial points of the festival, particularly in view of its famous celebration in the year 44 B.C. 1). However, some essential features of it by all authors on the subject so far have been, I fear, overlooked. As I have already treated of Ovid's Lupercalia as a whole elsewhere 2), I shall here tackle just one detail of the description, which I think to be the best starting-point for renewing the discussion, namely the vexed line 282. In the most recent edition of Fastorum Liber II, by H. Le Bonniec, this utterly enigmatic line reads thus: 3)

flamen ad haec prisco mone Dialis erat.

The commentary ad loc. resumes the difficulties involved: “Seul témoignage sur la participation du flamine de Jupiter aux rites des Lupercales. Ce texte, peu satisfaisant (ad haec et erat ont été suspects), fait difficulté du point de vue religieux: le flamen Dialis n'avait pas le droit de toucher, ni de nommer les chèvres et les chiens (Plutarque, Quest. rom., 111; Aulu-Gelle, X, 15, 12); or ces animaux étaient sacrifiés lors de la fête. K. Latte se demande s'il ne s'agirait

2) In using in the present paper the word "elsewhere" in this context I am referring to Ovidius en de Lupercalia, Hermeneus, 43, 1971-72, 5/6, 242-247; Ovid and the Lupercalia, Historia, 21, 1972, 000-000; Femina Virtus, forthcoming in the Acta Conv. Int. Ovid. of 1972 (Bucarest).
pas d'une innovation datant de la restauration augustéenne des Lupercales (Röm. Religionsgesch., 84, n. 3). Mais il est peu conceivable qu'Auguste ait modifié les fonctions du prêtre le plus vénérable et le plus fossilisé de la religion romaine. De plus, erat condamne cette hypothèse; quant à erit, moins bien attesté, on ne voit pas comment l'expliquer. Nous comprenons que le rituel antique (prisco more) comportait la participation du Dialis, mais que cette coutume était tombée en désuétude: n'oublions pas que le flamonium de Jupiter était sans titulaire depuis 75 ans quand il fut restauré par Auguste. De toute façon, la violation des "tabous" n'a pas encore été expliquée d'une manière satisfaisante". Quite amazing is the sentence "Nous comprenons ..., for so far, as is admitted at the end of the comment, we do not understand at all the presence of the flamen Dialis at the festival, whether at the original or at the restored one. J. Bayet even says: "la vue même d'un chien était interdite à ce prêtre" 4). Le Bonniec, therefore, far from elucidating the reading erat, only stresses the enigmatic nature of the line. That may explain why at least one later copist suppressed the lines 281-82 altogether, probably for containing a ritual impossibility 5). Yet, as all modern editors do I take it that Ovid did write the lines, and this not only because they round off the passage (271-82) in a quite satisfactory manner and, therefore, cannot be missed.

If Ovid was right in noting the presence of the flamen Dialis — and it is unthinkable that in doing so he simply told an obvious lie —, this presence must have been a ritual blunder of the emperor. This is what Le Bonniec refuses to believe, but then he seems to forget that Augustus indeed made some alterations in the status of the flamen Dialis, and rather drastic ones at that. When the same thing was done in the reign of Tiberius, Tacitus has it that this was done precisely sicut Augustus quaedam ex horrida illa antiquitate ad praesentem usum flexisset (Ann. 4. 16). Evidently Augustus would not have succeeded at all in appointing a flamen Dialis in 12 (or 11) B.C. otherwise than "durch Milderung der auf dem Amte lastenden sakralen Verpflichtungen" (Altheim 6). So, considering Tacitus' words ad praesentem

5) Still both lines are added by a later hand at the foot of the page (ms. U).