

Of Birthdays

Sun, why do you hurry?
Why do you clear at one mad bound
The frail, sweet mist;
And, bursting once in shouting radiance,
Route out the lingering muses of the night?
Why do you scud and slither up your path
So easily and so cruelly?
Oh, dumb, relentless sun,
Is it I who goad you?
I would fight you, hold you ---
Tie you with sullen weights --- dream-wrought and terrible.
Oh, grant me but a little moment still,
Before you lash your noon light on the world;
Before you totter for that awful leap
That flings you from the zenith, leaving night ---
But stay: your brassy breath is fading now!
Oh, blind sun, dazed by your own thin light!
See now already how you call up little shadows ---
Blue and low, but feeling --- gathering,
They frighten me, they whisper as they creep;
Sweet Sun, be kind and spare us but an hour,
The air is purple now the wind is waiting
A long sigh from the west.

Forgive me, Sun,
I did forget the glory of thy setting!

Hugh Nibley 1926

The Roman Games as a Survival of an Archaic Year Cult

The paper deals with aspects of the Roman state cult in which alone are preserved the remnants of the ancient kinship. The recently, but well established existence of a year drama with a definite plot, appearing in so many places in the ancient and primitive world, suggests such a rite as the background for the Roman games.

The Romans celebrated a festival marking the life-cycle of the race, a dozen other races in distinct regions did the same. They assembled at a particular place by the water side and held a great fair, with markets, feasting, and booths. Wherever booths are found as ritual survivals they are a fixture of the year festival, the sacrificial meal was a feast of abundance supplied by the king, who was ancestor and god, and was distributed in forms which show that it was the gift of prosperity and abundance for the year. The cult of hospitality characterized the yearly gatherings where equality and sharing were the rule, and for such a tradition Rome offers plain independent evidence. All the regions noted engaged in ritual combat at the new year, and so did the Romans.
