

Maternal Foundations of Rome: Livia in *Fasti* 1.535-36

In Ovid's *Fasti* Carmenta ends her prophecy concerning Rome's future with the assurance of her own apotheosis and Livia's (*Fast.* 1.535-36). Carmenta's prominent role in the *Fasti* has been examined by scholars (Chiu 2016, Fantham 1992), as have the ways in which the text as a whole responds to the late Augustan regime (Newlands 1995). I examine the ways in which Ovid's Carmentalia recasts Rome's foundations as distinctly maternal. By interpolating Livia as *mater patriae*, Ovid positions motherhood as an important source of political and cultural clout in Augustan Rome. In doing so, Ovid subtly both reinforces Augustus' own ideology and modifies to fit the shifting politics of the late Augustan period.

First, I examine instances in which Ovid exaggerates Carmenta's maternal influence over her son. Throughout the episode, Evander is consistently defined by his relationship to his mother: *nobilior sacrae sanguine matris erat* (*Fast.* 1.472). Furthermore, Carmenta is shown to be the driving force behind Evander's journey to Italy (Chiu 2016), which is completed *doctae monitu Carmentis* (*Fast.* 1.499). In this way, Carmenta elevates and embodies the traditional maternal values connected to the Augustan moral program (Milnor 2005). Carmenta's prophecy on the banks of Italy further links motherhood to Rome's success (*Fast.* 1.513-36). It is at the end of this prophecy that Carmenta compares herself to Livia, who is made the *exemplum* of Roman power and success: *utque ego perpetuis olim sacrorum in aris, / sic Augustus novum Iulia numen erit* (*Fast.* 1.535-36). This interruption connects Livia to the Carmentalia and deifies Livia's motherhood, placing her within a long and established line of mothers and enveloping her into Roman religious life. (Simpson 1991). Thus, Ovid links motherhood and power within the text in ways that are salient for his contemporary Rome.

Commented [SW1]: I am uncertain about this word but I know Augustus was pater patriae and Livia was given a feminized version of this title

Next, I argue that this episode ties motherhood to Rome's founding. Carmenta is only the first of many mothers who are overshadowed by their male counterparts. Ovid's depictions of the Sabine women, Juno, Silvia, and Lucretia each use their influence as mothers, in ways socially expected and endorsed in actual Roman society (Fischler 1994), in order to create lasting change. However, these founding mothers often inadvertently emasculate their sons. Thus, Ovid undermines the actions and achievements of important Roman figures by emphasizing the active role mothers take in political, social, and cultural contexts.

I conclude that Ovid's formulation of mothers in this episode responds to the contemporary political climate. Livia herself garnered prestige as Augustus' wife, but also beyond his death as the mother of his children, particularly Tiberius. Her title Julia Augusta, the name used to address her here in the prophecy (Chiu 2016), indicates Livia's prominent position as the head of Augustus' cult, effectively placing her at the top of Roman religious life (Purcell 1986, Simpson 1991). In this way, Ovid's equation of Livia and Carmenta further adds to her religious honors. Scholars have shown how Livia was integral in the development of Augustan power and ideology (Purcell 1986, Fischler 1994), for which she modeled the paradoxical realities of imperial women, anchored in both the private sphere through Augustan moral legislation, and given unprecedented visibility through their involvement in public and political life (Bauman 1992). Building upon this work, I argue that the Carmenta aligns Ovid with Livia's politics as the poet made his final attempts to return from exile.

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