

Lest we Forget: Object Lessons in the *Monumenta* of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

Although the concept of the *monumentum* has been explored in scholarly works on Virgil (Hardie 1986, Berlin 1998), Livy (Jaeger 1997), and Ovid's *Fasti* (Newlands 2002, Green 2004) there has not yet been a study of the use of the word *monumentum* in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This paper relates Ovid's use of *monumentum* to the visual monuments that are the products of Augustus' architectural and artistic program.

Augustan Rome was a city obsessed with image and commemoration. Augustus used his building programs self-consciously to leave a lasting imprint on the urban fabric and society of Rome. These *monumenta* could be both idealizing and admonishing for the viewer. On the one hand they memorialized a utopian view of the Augustan peace and regime but on the other they showed the consequences for those who chose to defy or threaten the Roman state and the *mos maiorum*. Ovid explores the positive and negative aspects of the *monumentum* in his uses of this term in the *Metamorphoses*.

In it, Ovid employs the word *monumentum* a total of six times: in 1.156 (Earth's re-creation of men from the decaying bodies of the Giants); 4.161 (Thisbe's prayer to the mulberry tree); 4.550 (Juno's transformation of Ino's friends to stone); 5.225 (Perseus' use of Medusa's head to turn Phineas to stone); 10.725 (the origin of the festival of Adonis in honor of Venus' grief); 13.524 (Hecuba mourning dead Polyxena who is not to be buried in the family tomb). Superficially, these episodes seem to have little to do with one another. However, a closer reading reveals that they are united by themes of civil strife, bloodshed, abuse of power, and the injustice of divine will, forming a commentary on Augustan object lessons and visual propaganda in the form of monuments.

Two of the occurrences refer to bloody births (Giants; Pyramus and Thisbe), two others refer to the creation of stone statues (Ino's friends; Phineas), one refers to a festival resulting from a violent death (Adonis), and one refers to a tomb (Polyxena). These are all uses which can be traced to Augustan programs of reform and visual propaganda. The instances seem to point to one complex in particular, the centerpiece of Augustus' stamp on the civic life of Rome: the Forum Augustum. The Forum monumentalized not only the great heroes of Rome's past but also its great enemies, whose names were carved on the upper registers of the porticoes. The Temple of Mars Ultor further drew attention to the theme of defiance and revenge with the focus on Caesar's assassination. Ovid directly relates these Augustan monuments to civil war and its effects (Barchiesi 2005) but focuses on the losers in these contests. They are the object lessons which in turn support the positive *exempla*.

Works Cited:

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